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Senses of the Subject

Neoliberalism, Psychic Investments and the Capacity to Care in Finance and Accounting

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King's College London

Senses of the Subject:

Neoliberalism, Psychic Investments and the
Capacity to Care in Finance and Accounting

Darren Thomas Baker

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Management and
Business for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London,
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Although the research was not ethnographic, I often felt, curiously, as if it were; London is a key organ in the neoliberal corpus and it was hard not to notice the different ways in which qualities, such as narcissism and individualism, were defensively embodied and lived out in everyday life in the capital, which despite its frivolity, leaves an undeniable melancholic hue. This experience undoubtedly alerted me to aspects of the workplace that perhaps I would not have otherwise noted. Although it often felt ironic as a economically precarious student in one of the most expensive cities in the world, listening to the legitimate challenges faced by relatively privileged women (and men) in accounting and finance, I do think there is much more to be said about the encroachment and colonisation of precarity on middle class, ‘bourgeois’ workers under neoliberalism. This raised important practical questions for me around how one could build greater consciousness of this across class boundaries. I am, therefore, grateful to the PhD for this important political ‘awakening’.

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who reflect each day, whether big or small, on how they can stand in solidarity and empathy with others.

Abstract

There is a lacuna of research exploring gender from a psychosocial perspective in accounting and finance. This thesis explores the experiences and psycho-discursive dynamics at the subject-level, and how they interconnect with broader neoliberal discourses circulating in the UK. This contributes to our understanding of how economic rationales shape the psychic lives of employees. Firstly, the thesis explores examples of shared frames of understanding that emerge relationally within a phallic economy. Secondly, it considers how these frames and other organisational norms and practices register psychically through states of unknowingness-knowingness, paranoia, anxiety and guilt at work. Finally, the thesis attempts to problematise the assumption that subjects are completely static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism by reflecting on examples of *counter-investments*, what I term “capacities to care”, which can emerge within neoliberalism. Through the theoretical and methodological imbrication of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis, this thesis begins to map the collective constellational investments that subjects can *move in* and *move away from* under neoliberalism.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract.....	5
Table of Contents	6
Chapter One.....	8
Introduction	8
Chapter Two	13
Neoliberalism and Gender Scholarship in Accounting and Finance	13
Gender in accounting and finance.....	15
Gendered histories of accounting and finance	15
Accountant and finance institutions as gendered and gendering	21
Embodiment and gender.....	30
Neoliberalism, gender, and finance and accounting.....	35
Neoliberalism and women as subjects par excellence	39
Conclusion	48
Chapter Three	49
Conceptual Framework: Butler, discourse analysis and psychoanalysis	49
Gender performativity, melancholia, grief and non-violent action	50
Gender performativity and the psychic life of power	50
Melancholia, violence, and relational ethics.....	53
Bringing together the theory of gender performativity, precarious lives and relational ethics.....	59
Discourse Analysis	61
Discourse analysis approach	62
Bringing together discourse analysis and Butlerian scholarship.....	69
Psychoanalysis and discourse analysis	73
Tensions between psychoanalysis and discourse analysis	73
Psychic investments: a reapproachment of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis	77
Bringing together the ideas of non-violent action by Butler and ambivalence by psychosocial scholars	86
Conclusion	88
Chapter Four	90
Towards a Psychoanalytically Informed Qualitative Research Enquiry	90
Research objective and aims.....	91
Psychoanalysis in Qualitative Research	93
Data Collection	97
Data Interpretation.....	106
Reflexivity	113
Ethical dilemmas	124
Conclusion	128
Chapter Five	129
The Phallic Economy	129
Uncontrollable Phallic Desires	131

Externalising Masculinity	139
Confidence Repertoires	146
Self-Reckrimination and Self-Pleasure.....	153
Discussion: The Confidence Paradox	165
Conclusion	172
Chapter Six.....	174
Senses of the Subject.....	174
Senses of Precariousness.....	176
Senses of Solitude	181
Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness	188
Discussion: better unknowing than angry	196
Conclusion	201
Chapter Seven.....	203
Giving an account of oneself.....	203
Repudiation and Individualisation.....	205
Projection and Self-Autonomy	210
Vulnerability, Melancholia and the Capacity to Care.....	215
Discussion	223
Conclusion	227
Chapter Eight	229
Conclusion: Mapping the Constellational Positions of the Neoliberal Subject	229
Phallic Positions.....	232
Narcissistically Invested, Down-Up Position.....	234
Sadomasochistic, Up-Down Position.....	236
Double-Down Position.....	238
Paranoid-Schizoid Position and Split-Self.....	239
Capacity to Care	242
Further Explorations	243
Concluding Remarks.....	245
Appendices	247
Appendix I: Interview Guide.....	247
Appendix II: Participant Consent Form.....	252
.....	254
Appendix III: Participant Information Sheet.....	254
Appendix IV: Table of participants	258
Appendix V: Transcription Notations.....	262
Bibliography:	263

Chapter One

Introduction

There is a lacuna of research exploring gendered experiences from a psychosocial perspective in accounting and finance. The thesis sets out to explore the experiences and discourses drawn on at the subject-level and how they interconnect with broader neoliberal discourses in the UK. This contributes to our understanding how economic rationales shape the psychic life of employees. Firstly, the thesis explores the relational construction of confidence within a phallic system. Secondly, it explores the injuries inflicted on subjects by unfair organisational norms and practices, and how they register psychically through states of paranoia, guilt and anxiety. This “ground-up” view on the construction of subjectivity and its mapping back to the circulation of broader neoliberal discourses, I argue, avoids the individualisation and pathologisation of experiences; a criticism that would be typically levelled against ‘traditional’ psychoanalysis. Thirdly, the thesis attempts to challenge existing assumptions in scholarship regarding subjects as static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. I attempt to do this by reflecting on the emergence of what I term, “capacities to care”. In this way, the thesis maps the different investments and positions that subjects *move in, out of and away from*. Through the exploration of the subject in such terms, I will show in the thesis how the neoliberal subject is neither homogenous nor static. I also argue that the pragmatic imbrication of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis enables such an exploration.

The thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I explore the oeuvre of scholarship on gender in finance and accounting. However, I argue in this chapter that existing studies on the experiences of women and men in

finance and accounting in the UK largely neglects the texture of neoliberal life (Adapa et al., 2016; Kokot, 2015). The scholarship appears uncritical of how women are “positioned” in the profession, for instance, the literature does not elucidate or explain the reasons *why* women have work-life challenges. As such, I argue that much of the existing scholarship side steps more profound questions regarding how broader economic and cultural rationales interconnect and (re)shape subjectivities and relational ties at work. Scholarship thus runs the risk of reproducing and concretising neoliberal norms and practices, which render women and other minorities as marginal in organisations. I argue that scholars could redress this through the application of psychosocial theories and methods in order to understand fully how aspects of work “get inside” the lives of women, transforming and shaping their subjectivities and relations with others (Gill, 2009; Scharff, 2011, 2012, 2015b; Walkerdine, 2003). Thus, it is important for scholars to get under the taken for granted world of neoliberalism and understand the operation of the psychic life of power, and the inconspicuous ways in which economic and cultural rationales shape tropologically the individual and shared psyches of subjects.

In Chapter Three, I explore the theories required to investigate and understand some of the gaps identified in Chapter Two. I do this by bringing together a number of different bodies of work regarding gender performativity, grief and non-violent action by Judith Butler, discourse analysis and psychoanalytical work on ‘emotional investments’. I argue overall that the imbrication of these distinct bodies of work provides a framework to understand how subjectivities are shaped by and resist individualistic, neoliberal forces in the workplace. The intention of this chapter is not to trace the complete oeuvre of Butler but to draw out relevant aspects of her theories and show how they interconnect. I suggest that Butler’s work has been in recent years been criticised for neglecting the intricacies of how subjectivities are accomplished in day-to-day interactions and talk. Therefore, I explain how discourse analysis can be used in conjunction with the work of Butler to provide the practical tools required to investigate empirically some of her ideas. However, discourse theory has, in

turn, been criticised by psychoanalysts for ‘discourse determinism’ and failing to consider important aspects of subject development, in particular, *why* individuals come to take up identity positions over time. I argue, however, that there are in fact many congruencies between the two approaches and by drawing on psychoanalytical concepts, such as emotional investments, discourse analysts can enrich their understanding of the construction of subjectivities over time. I also argue that theories such as emotional investments chime with Butlerian thinking on non-violent action and relational ethics.

In Chapter Four, I explain how my concern with psychoanalysis brought me to the point where I wanted to explore how one could use it in ways that could develop new ways of carrying out qualitative research that are more detached from positivist principles that lurk behind much of social science research (Hollway, 2012). I attempt, therefore, to develop an indicative qualitative research method inspired by psychoanalysis. I argue that the pursuit of an alternative psychoanalytical epistemology can enable scholars to redress some of the most pertinent challenges evaded in qualitative research enquiries, specifically regarding a more meaningful approach to reflexivity, and generating richer participant responses. I suggest, therefore, that psychoanalytical principles taken from, for instance, the Freudian inspired “Free Association Narrative Interview Method” by Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000b, 2008, 2009) and ‘Reverie’ by Wilfred Bion can help scholars to move beyond the verbal or ‘what is said’, to a more complex exploration of how affect and psycho-dynamics structure individual and shared subject accounts.

In Chapter Five, I explore “Confidence Repertoires” as an example of a discursive shared frame used by women to rationalise organisational norms and practices in accounting and finance. In this chapter, I draw on the idea of the phallus to symbolise the phallic nature of ‘confidence’, as emerging from a position of dominance and power. I explore the phallic system in

which women are constructed as bearing a “confidence deficit” for failing to express qualities associated with confidence, such as aggression and narcissism. I explain how women self-recriminate for expressing qualities disassociated with confidence, such as reflexivity, contemplation and pragmatism. I argue that these repertoires have a pernicious force as they, firstly, distract women from broader discriminatory norms that favour masculine behaviours and, second, individualise this as a form of “lack” or “deficit” that women must themselves self-manage and improve upon. Despite recognising how these behaviours were problematic, they nevertheless had to mimic these qualities in order to ‘keep up’ with colleagues. Thus, women collude somewhat reluctantly in the construction of qualities associated with masculinity as a fundamental way to exchange successfully within the phallic economy.

In Chapter Six, I explore how phallic frames of work register affectively on subjects in the form of senses of paranoia, anxiety, guilt and fear. More specifically, I identify three senses of the subject. Firstly, “Senses of Precariousness”, I explore the heightened imagery drawn on by subjects to symbolize extensive and intensive workplace practices, which evoke senses of suffocation, powerlessness and a lack of control. Second, in “Senses of Solitude”, I explain how women face significant problems forging relationships both privately and with work colleagues as a result of intensive and individualistic organisational norms. Finally, in “Senses of Knowing-Unknowness”, paranoia, guilt and discomfort were evoked in women as a result of the unknowingness of whether they could trust others at work and whether taking maternity leave would adversely impact their future career and relational ties. However, curiously, I argue that rather than prompting subjects into positions of anger and frustration with the organisational norms and practices that have inflicted them with such senses, they rationalize themselves as the ‘source’ of their emotions.

In Chapter Seven, I explore some of the defensive positions drawn on by

women used to shield and protect neoliberal ideas regarding meritocracy and ‘fairness’ at work. In these defended positions, women repudiated inequality and appeared to redirect responsibility for change onto the self rather than critiquing and challenging broader structural and cultural constraints to equality. However, I also attempt to show how these narcissistically invested positions were juxtaposed by experiences of vulnerability in the hands of significant others in the workplace. In some instance, I argue that these experiences appeared to prompt some women towards more ethical and responsible positions, what I term “the capacity to care”, resulting from the injuries that they have sustained.

At the end of the thesis, I map the constellational positions of the neoliberal subject. I argue that a subject will come to occupy a number of these positions when giving an account of oneself. This is not to suggest that the subject moves ‘equally’ between positions. Instead, individual subject accounts contain different concentrations of investments, which can evoke senses of the subject as “flat”, “melancholic” or “lonely”. This mapping resonates with how psychoanalysis may begin to examine and conceptualise individual cases. However, drawing these positions out from across accounts given by participants enables one to understand shared and collective positions, which ensures that the individual is not pathologised. However, this is not to over-criticise the traditional approach taken by psychoanalysts. On the contrary, I argue in this section how it would be fascinating for scholars to combine both approaches. In other words, scholars could both draw out collective and shared constellational positions but as well as trace these positions within an individual account. My feeling is that this would enable scholars to understand better the “mechanisms” and movements between individual positions, as focusing alone on shared positions, often means that the unique ways in which different positions are assumed can become less clear. It would also allow conserve the peculiarities of an individual psych-biography.

Chapter Two

Neoliberalism and Gender Scholarship in Accounting and Finance

In this first section of the chapter, I explore the oeuvre of scholarship on women in the finance and accounting sector. The section is divided into three sub-sections: the history of women in the sector, gendered structures and gendered embodiment. In the second section, I explore some of the interconnections between financial and accounting practices and how these have exacerbated inequality, and its disproportionate impact on women. In the final section, I explore the literature on postfeminism and neoliberalism, particularly within media studies. Although of great importance to scholarly feminism, this work tends to be theoretically oriented (Hall and O'Shea, 2013; McNay, 2009), relying on textual readings rather than empirical evidence captured from the field (Binkley, 2011; Bröckling, 2005), and generally adopts a Foucauldian perspective. I argue that an exploration of empirical evidence on the construction of subjectivities from the “ground up”, particularly ideas regarding psychic reality (Roseneil, 2009; Scharff, 2015b; Walkerdine, 2003; Walkerdine et al., 2001), would enable scholars to understand how neoliberal economic rationales are installed and tropologically shape the “collective psyche” of subjects in finance and accounting. Moreover, there appears to be a view of the ‘neoliberal subject’ as somewhat ‘static’, implicitly reproducing neoliberalism. There is, thus, more work to be done by scholars on subjectivities as “oscillatory”. In other words, scholars may wish to consider *what* the constellations and concentrations of positions are assumed by subjects, and *why* these are invested in. This would provide a much deeper and richer understanding of subjectivities and their construction at work.

I argue in this chapter that existing studies on the experiences of women and men in the finance and accounting in the UK largely neglects the texture of neoliberal life (Adapa et al., 2016; Kokot, 2015). The literature is, therefore, uncritical of how women are ‘positioned’ in the profession, for instance, with regards to work-life challenges, and scholarship does not generally elucidate or explain the reasons *why* women face these and other issues. As such, many of the studies sidestep deeper and more profound questions regarding the relationship between how economic and cultural rationales interconnect and reshape subjectivities and relational ties in arguably adverse ways. This is important to contextualize as scholarship runs the real risk of reproducing and concretising neoliberal norms and practices, which render women and other minorities as marginal in organisations. Finally, I also suggest that much of the literature is also heteronormative in that it considers only the experiences and challenges of straight women and men, and neglects those of, for instance, single women or LGBT carers.

Thus, I argue that one way that scholars could redress this would be with the application of psychosocial theories and methods in order to understand fully how aspects of work, such as temporal commitments of accounting and finance roles, ‘get inside’ the lives of women, transforming and shaping their subjectivities and relations with oneself and others (Gill, 2009; Scharff, 2011, 2012, 2015b; Walkerdine, 2003). Moreover, this would enable scholars to make important connections between the subject level, or “ground-up” constructions, and broader neoliberal discourses circulating. It is important to get beyond the “taken for granted” to understand the psychic life of power under neoliberalism and the inconspicuous ways in which the economic rationales shape tropologically the shared psyche of subjects.

Gender in accounting and finance

In this section, I explore scholarship on gender within the finance and accounting sector. Much of the literature has explored in detail the horizontal segregation historically of women from professional bodies and organisations, and the eventual acceptance of and increase in the representation of women in the profession from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, and the subsequent challenges that have emerged. The second part of this section traces the literature on the experiences of women in the sector, particularly work-life balance pressures and discriminatory norms that women face. The final sub-section traces the theme of embodiment and gender in accounting and finance, and argues that there remains further scope for research to explore this, particularly from a psychosocial perspective.

Gendered histories of accounting and finance

The first important body of scholarship on gender in accounting and finance is concerned with the gendered history of the sector, and focuses on the social and cultural norms that have shaped the sector. Women entered the finance sector as bookkeepers and clerical workers towards the end of the nineteenth century (Kirkham and Loft, 1993). Walker (2003a) explores the chronology in the ‘feminisation’ of bookkeeping. The liberal feminist movement advocated the recruitment of women as bookkeepers in the public sphere, as they were perceived to have the ‘physical’ and ‘mental capacities’ required for processing ‘routine transactions’. The move was propagandised as cheap labour for the ‘surplus of educated spinsters and widows’, who required paid employment during this time (p.631). Other women were less visible, bookkeeping in family businesses on a “railed-in desk” in the corner (p.622). It was around this time that accountancy began to emerge and professional associations were established. These bodies

explicitly sought to exclude different classes of people, including women by virtue of their sex, as well men from working class backgrounds (Kirkham and Loft, 1993). As women and working class men entered bookkeeping and clerical occupations, its attachment to the newly emerging accountancy profession became problematic, as it worked to differentiate itself as an elite, specialized and gentlemanly profession (ibid).

Male accountants continued to create barriers for entry into the profession to women in the early part of the twentieth century. Cooper (2010), for instance, draws parallels with the UK by exploring the reasons why women were excluded from accessing the accountancy profession in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Men resisted the access of women to the sector, as they believed that women would devalue the status of the profession, drive down the remuneration of male accounts and that, ultimately, they did not possess the aptitude required to be an effective accountant. Similarly, Shackleton (1999) traced the masculine discourses expressed by local professional accounting firms that surfaced in the Scottish Chartered Accountant profession during the first two decades of the twentieth century on the issue of women moving into the profession. These firms deployed a number of discursive 'blocking strategies' to women entering the profession (Shackleton, 1999). These centered on denial discourses, where it was claimed that there was no demand for women in the profession, and discourses on legal and constitutional change, which were subject to male support and endorsement. After admitting women into the profession, The Scottish Chartered Society devised an admission policy founded on gender segregation whereby women were accepted into the society at a lower status (*also* McKeen and Richardson, 1991).

Many of the women campaigning for access to the profession were active suffragettes. However, they did not work alone and drew on the support of men who at that time had greater access to civil institutions (Walkrt, 2003b; 2011b). Walker (2011b) describes how their two main strategies of

challenge were founded on, firstly, an inclusionary strategy focused on claims for equal rights and, secondly, a separatist pursuit in which women wanted separate institutes and firms for female accountants. By 1909 when the professional bodies had in principle accepted the admission of women, the required legislation however did not reach the statute books. This gave conservative male accountants the opportunity to counterattack and reconfigure separatist arguments to devise an alternative form of exclusion, based on internal demarcations, and the creation of a gendered occupational hierarchy, which would ensure the continuation of patriarchal power (ibid). At the same time, a female anti-suffragette movement was emerging in the UK and US, which drew on precepts from scientific management to reinvigorate the idea of the individualist woman at home, who were termed 'household engineers' (Walker, 2003b). This 'professionalisation' of the private sphere drew on the use of accounting and financial management, including record keeping and costing activities. This reasserted private patriarchy by reinforcing women as the consumer and home carer rather than as career focused.

Despite the admission of women into professional bodies in the UK in 1920 following the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990), and the increase number of women preparing for the field, the majority of women continued to enter bookkeeping and clerical positions. Perhaps uncannily to contemporary rationales for female workplace exclusion, this was substantiated on the grounds that women would not cope with the long working hours demanded, the frequent travel, client antagonism, and the perceived challenges regarding the socialization of men and women within the sector (Wescott and Seiler, 1986). In addition, 'old boy networks' meant that women struggled to gain employment in firms and complete their qualification. Women were, therefore, restricted to smaller businesses. However, women often enjoyed the more advisory nature of these roles and the closer relationships they were able to forge with clients (ibid). Similarly, Boyer (2008) provides an interesting account of how female clerical workers in the financial services in the early part of the 20th century were spatially tied to fixed pieces of

equipment, such as typewriters, whereas their more senior male colleagues were given their own desks and Dictaphones that promoted thinking, mobility and conversations. Boyer (2008) also describes how women were prohibited from applying for international office transfers and were, therefore, spatially restricted across multiple scales. However, these studies can be criticised for homogenising the category 'woman' and, therefore, neglecting their individual experiences. In addition, these studies only tend to examine 'women' in lower level occupations and ignore women, albeit few, who have been successful in traditionally male dominated occupations.

The continued underrepresentation of women in the sector was substantiated on the basis that few women applied for accounting positions. Lehman (1992) explored the obstacles that have excluded women from both entering the profession and advancing their careers once they had entered the sector in both the US and UK. The paper argues that women were hindered because of structural and cultural barriers. Structurally, women often received lower wages and were not offered maternity leave. Culturally, there were institutionalised norms and social practices that sustained repressive gender roles, for example, many women were forced to take up clerical positions or bookkeeping in the hope of occupying accounting positions in the future (Lehman, 1992). However, Kirkham (1992) criticises Lehman (1992) for not considering *why* these barriers were employed. Although Kirkham (1992) acknowledges the point by Lehman (1992) that there are both ideological and structural processes that occur which marginalise women, many of these processes are subtler, for example, how skills and performance are constructed in masculine terms. Kirkham (1992) explains that barriers relate to attempts by those in power at controlling the boundaries of the occupation, for example, through the subordination of related occupations as bookkeeping or typing tasks. These were all ways of excluding women from power within the profession (Kirkham, 1992).

There is also a small body of historical literature that traces the challenges faced by some of the first individual women to enter the accounting profession. Two common themes emerging from the individual accounts include, the challenges and triumphs the women faced setting up their own accountant practices, often due to the challenges to progression faced in more established firms, and the dedication of their skills and services to advancing gender equality, in addition to their broader philanthropic efforts. Walker (2011a), for instance, explores the professional life of Ethel Ayres Purdie who set up her own accounting practice in the early years of the twentieth century. Despite the hostility to independent women setting up their own businesses during this time, Ethel was able to amass a client base of primarily women and women's organisations that understand the effects of sexism and subordination. Ethel deployed her skills to the advancement of equality for women through, for example, the critique and removal of sex discrimination income tax laws, particularly relating to married women. Similarly, Cooper, (2008) explores the history of Mary Addison Hamilton or 'Addie' who was one of the first qualified accountants in Australia in the early twentieth century, and dedicated her time quietly working behind the scenes volunteering her accounting skills and financial knowledge to charities concerned with advocating women's causes. Although Addie did not pursue a career in accounting, she was appointed to the Western Australia public service reaching a senior position, and continued to train and support young trainee accountants. Finally, drawing on the accounting ledgers and correspondences of one of the first qualified women in Scotland, Helen Lowe, Jeacle (2011) traces how she set up her own business in 1928 and how she successfully ran it for almost 70 years. Helen pursued setting up her own business as she faced very little chance of promotion within the firm she was working in. Similar to some of the aforementioned individual accounts, the success of her firm was due in part to a very loyal client base. Helen was active in broader, philanthropic efforts in Edinburgh, fundraising to establish an elderly care home, and supported medical women, including campaigning to keep hospitals open, which resulted in an honorary membership of the Medical Women's Federation.

By the second half of the twentieth century, the transition of women into the profession remained sluggish. Surveying female members of the ICAEW, Silverstone and Williams (1979) found that the profession continued to be perceived as male, with the persistence of prejudice towards women, as well as gender stereotypical career advice given during secondary education (Silverstone and Williams, 1979). Ciancanelli et al. (1990) also conducted an important study on the participation of women in the UK accounting profession between 1977-88 using data from the ICAEW and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The study found that despite women entering the profession in large numbers, they were still vastly underrepresented at higher ranks, reflecting gender asymmetries between female and male career trajectories in the profession. What is most interesting about the findings are that women were better qualified at the point of entry into training contracts than men, and women also appeared to perform well, if not better, than men during their training contracts. Crompton (1989) and Zimmeck (1992), for example, show how women became concentrated into specific, lower level positions within financial service institutions, performing roles such as keypunching, shorthand and typing (see also Walby, 1988). Although these roles were flexible, they were poorly remunerated relative to other roles within the sector.

Much of the historical literature exploring gender in finance and accounting has detailed how women were horizontally segregated from the profession and were not given access to organisations or membership of professional bodies. Scholarship with an historical focus provides insight into the temporal patterns of gender marginalization and mistreatment, and indicates how aspects of inequality have metamorphosed over time and persisted, arguably in more pernicious forms contemporaneously (McRobbie, 2009; Scharff, 2012). Despite the acceptance of women into the profession since the 1970s, women continue to face vertical segregation with regards to their limited access to more senior positions and levels within organisation, which the next section now turns to.

Accountant and finance institutions as gendered and gendering

Despite the transition of women into the accountant and finance profession, they continue to face significant challenges with regards to discrimination and career progress. Broadbent (1998) argues that gendered values are embedded in 'accounting logics', which represent the 'universal masculine'. This refers to the way in which organisations are guided by logics that conceptualise activities in only financial terms, and with regards to measurable outputs, which influence communications and decision making in organisations. Alternative positions are, thus, closed down or excluded, especially those represented by the 'universal feminine', such as social and environmental impact information. Broadbent (1998) advocates the introduction of emotion and subjectivity into the way accounting is done through engaging with and garnering the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, and thus, advocating a more emancipatory accounting profession.

With the work of Broadbent (1998) in mind, research must contend with the subtle ways in which gendered processes permeate the culture and structure of organisations in the exclusion of women and others. Hull and Umanksy (1997) showed how sex-role stereotypes significantly impacted the evaluation of female accountants, which significantly hindered their advancement to partnership. The study found that behaviours were evaluated differently according to whether they were attributed to men or women, for example, female managers who exhibited masculine leadership styles were considered ineffective by other male managers (Hull and Umansky, 1997). The implication of this is that potential female partners are evaluated against these competencies and are often considered less effective than their male colleagues. Maupin and Lehman (1994) found that women and men in their study advancing to partnership exhibited stereotypically

masculine characteristics, for instance, assertiveness, domination, forcefulness, and independence. This indicates that in order to be successful, one must suppress attributes perceived as feminine and 'do' gender in ways that are considered more stereotypically masculine (Maupin and Lehman, 1994). Research by Quental and Kelan (2015) provides a fine-grained analysis of the gendering of skills in the partner selection process. Potential partners are evaluated less on their technical skills and more on intangible attributes such as their self-presentation, attitude, professional embodiment and ability to engage and build rapport with leaders. However, these desired competencies such as attitude, positioning, and the capacity to engage and build rapport with leaders were perceived of in highly stereotypical masculine ways but were vital in the transition to partner. This transformation requires what Quental and Kelan (2015) term the move from "savoir-faire" to "savoir-être" and denotes more than just a move from technical to social skills, but a mastering of "knowing how to be" (p.29). This is focused on the demand to create intimacy with clients and cultivating an expert image.

The influential study by Grey (1998) of professional service firms highlighted how perceptions of 'professionalism', and the ability to be taken seriously by clients, were rarely framed in terms of technical competencies or qualifications, but were instead bound up in subjective qualities. Non-technical and social relations were regulated and scrutinized based on conditions such as skin, clothes, and the length of one's skirt. Grey (1998) explains that this was problematic for equality, as the implication of these conditions was that organisations were seeking not just men, but middle class, heterosexual men. Similarly, Kumra and Vinnicombe (2010) highlight the importance of impression management and the requirement for women to ensure that they are always 'ambitious, likeable and available' in a professional services firm. The accumulation of this social capital was important in order to secure pivotal projects or receive the right support. Female professionals had to be not only technically excellent but also

proactively work to dispel stereotypes regarding their 'commitment', especially temporally to the profession, and the perception that they somehow 'lacked ambition'. Finally, Mueller et al. (2011) explore the impact of 'playing the game' on career progress in big four accounting firms. Female accountants were angry, pressured and cynical regarding, firstly, their ambitions to be successful and remain loyal to the firm, whilst distancing themselves from gendered practices that emphasised visibility and exposure in order to get ahead in their careers.

Despite the overall increase in representation of women in the finance and accounting sector, this occludes both the continued dominance of men at higher echelons of the sector, and the reactionary emergence of other forms of occupational segregation. Almer et al. (2012) explore the implicit rationales for the introduction of the director level between senior manager and partner level in professional service firms. Although it may appear that the firms are reconfiguring their traditional 'up or out model', as a way to retain valuable staff who do not yet have the skills to be partner, the evidence suggests that it serves to decrease partner workload and increase their compensation. Moreover, the majority of directors are women, which means the new rung represents the continued structural segregation of women within the sector. Khalifa (2013) explores how certain specialisms in accounting, such as corporate finance, auditing, personal and corporate tax, and corporate recovery, have gendered understandings, which result in a value or devaluation of the specialism. Personal tax, for instance, was perceived as the career for mothers as it enabled women to accommodate family demands, but was less financially rewarding. Overall, personal tax was considered less reputable as it required less levels of commitment.

Similarly, Joyce and Walker (2015) analyse the specialist sub-field of insolvency to identify horizontal segregation and how it is sustained by varieties of gender essentialism. Insolvency was perceived as appropriate for the expression of masculine aggression, detachment, and careerism.

Gender essentialism, in particular, was seen in the allocation of tasks and roles. For instance, in difficult and aggressive client meetings where mainly men were present, women were asked to attend the meetings in order to appease angry clients. Thus, such cases constructed women as the pacifier and men as the enforcers. However, Komori (2008) explores how Japanese female accountants have been able to 'cope' with discrimination through the deployment of a distinctly 'feminine' approach to their work. Whereas in many Anglo-Saxon contexts, the role of women in wider society is seen to inhibit career progression, some Japanese female accountants explained that their experience of being mothers made them more effective auditors. For instance, they claimed to be able to establish distinctive and important client relationships. Clients respected their scrupulous auditing practices, for which Japanese female accountants were reputed, and thus, ensure the ethical conduct of the profession.

The change in the shape of gender segmentation has meant that female accountants and financiers must pursue complex career routes and tracks. The research on gender segregation in accounting firms in France by Lupu (2012) challenges the concept of a singular, homogenous glass ceiling. Glass ceiling is a popular metaphor used to represent the unseen barriers to progress experienced by women in the workplace, particularly at senior level positions. Rather than a fixed, static glass ceiling transcending all women, Lupu describes the career trajectories of some women more as a labyrinth with multiple ups, downs and sideways manoeuvres. There is, thus, no singular, main obstacle to the career progression of women but a series of inhibitors that accumulate over time. The labyrinth does have one traditional career trajectory but also simultaneously multiple 'other' paths, which may bring success or conversely lead to an exiting of the organisation. Career trajectories in this respect are represented as twisted, detouring, blind alleyways rather than seamless ascensions. Women are more inclined because of family responsibilities to take secondary routes, such as taking more technical paths or positions that involve less travelling, which are considered to be less prestigious (*see also* Eagly & Carli 2007). In addition, Dambrin and Lambert (2008) offer an account of how mothers in

big four organisations evade typical barriers to partnership. This study examines the individual trajectories of women and shows how they often have to take alternative trajectories to partnership by, for example, specialising in particular areas of auditing or perhaps moving laterally out from client facing work to take on leadership positions in support functions particularly in human resources. This study confirmed that women have to think very strategically about their career moves. The study by Dambrin and Lambert (2008) is also unique as it considers the voices of fathers and shows how men find challenges managing fatherhood and keeping their professional careers in toe. Finally, Adapa et al. (2016) suggest that women working in medium size accounting firms experienced issues around flexibility, for instance, opportunities to job share, deadline pressures, and working in isolation. Women, it appeared, moved to smaller firms for exactly the opposite reasons, including better culture, job satisfaction, and opportunities for job sharing and enhanced progress to senior positions.

Another important body of literature explores the intersection between motherhood and professional life. Although childcare is increasingly seen in gender-neutral terms, particularly in the UK with the introduction of recent 'paternity leave' legislation, women continue, however, to be the main care provider within familial structures. Much of the scholarship on gender and accounting and finance explores the challenges women endure balancing societal demands and stereotypical perceptions with the workplace, regarding for instance, the commitment of women to their job and their ability to work very long hours (Anderson et al, 1994; Haynes, 2008; Windsor and Auyeung, 2006). Windsor and Auyeung (2006) show how gender and dependent children interact to impact the progression of women to partner level in accounting firms in Singapore and Australia. Although men were promoted more readily than women in accounting, the study reveals overall how mothers in particular were greatly disadvantaged and took significantly longer to attain more senior positions. The study by Whiting and Wright (2001) reveals that gender on its own was a relatively insignificant factor for promotion from audit seniors to managers in New

Zealand. However, gender became a more important factor when combined with family structure. The study found that married men with children were more likely to be promoted than comparable women auditors. However, curiously, married men in dual career marriages than they were less likely to be promoted than other married men with children. Dual career structures made no difference to promotion prospects for mothers.

Anderson et al (1994) also examined whether gender, family structure and physical appearance are perceived to impact the career trajectories of accountants across three firms. The results indicate that family issues are perceived to have a negative effect on the career progression of women to partner level in the organisation. The results also indicate that women who were perceived as being less attractive by peers were less likely to advance in their careers and were more likely to be asked to exit the organisation prematurely. Finally, through the examination of oral histories of mothers in accounting, Haynes (2008) found juxtapositions between the professional and private selves of female accountants. The women experienced anxiety returning to work after paternity leave as they felt that they were not achieving in either of their 'dual' identities as mothers and professionals. Haynes (2008) found that there were significant tensions and contradictions between how the mothers idealised notions of motherhood and childhood and what it meant to have a successful career. This was, in part, due to the varying degrees of inequality endured by the women including long working hours, derogatory comments, lack of understanding of childcare constraints and even constructive dismissal.

Another important body of scholarship regarding gender and careers in finance and accounting is concerned with work-life balance. Work-life balance refers the different choices and preferences individuals have with regards to their work and private sphere, based on often competing demands (Gammie and Whiting, 2013; Jeacle, 2008; Ladva and Andrew, 2014). Professionals working in accounting and finance face particular challenges

with regards to work-life balance in comparison with other sectors, primarily due to the long hours and travel often demanded by the job, which disproportionately impacts women (cf. Barker and Monks, 1998). Despite the success of accounting corporations, particularly big four firms, in shaking off traditional 'conservative' images regarding the 'boring' and 'grey' accountant, and reshaping themselves as fun and dynamic through, for instance, sporting images and specific ideologies in graduate recruitment materials, Jeacle (2008) rightly raises questions regarding the fallacious nature of the materials as a poor representation of the 'reality' of working at such firms. How can the multi-talented, for instance, rugby-playing accountant find the time to pursue such activities? Ladva and Andrew (2014) also explore similar tensions between what junior accountants considered a successful career and what was required to attain it, and their frustration with their lack of work-life balance. The study highlights how key managerial controls, such as time budgeting mechanisms, ideologies of efficiency, money, and ideas of what a successful career are, shape and control emerging professionals, who are always clocked on and eager to get things done. Exploring the reasons why junior accountants left the profession, Gammie and Whiting (2013) suggest that the primary reason given was to find more interesting work. Workplace culture and practices, including office politics and travel, were also ranked the second reason for leaving the profession. However, flexibility, in terms of time commitment, was not given as a reason for leaving the profession. Gammie and Whiting (2013) explain that this was probably due to the fact that most of the respondents had left the profession relatively early on in their careers and none were mothers, and were, therefore, unlikely to have experienced the discord between work and familial commitments. In addition, the research shows that despite leaving professional accountancy, many continued to experience similar working practices regardless of the working environment. There appears to be a sense of heteronormativity in much of the accounting and finance literature regarding the interface between work and life. Similar to broader management and organisational scholarship, the literature focuses heavily on the challenges of straight men and women and does not consider the challenges experienced by, for instance, single women or men with children or indeed gay couples with children.

Even when organisations have genuine concerns regarding the implications of work-life balance, particularly on women, their attempts to resolve the challenges can sometimes be in vein. Kornberger et al. (2010), for instance, examine the implementation of a flexibility programme at a big four firm. The programme was implemented as a way to mitigate high attrition rates amongst senior women in the firm. The study shows how the programme had the contrary effect, entrenching and reinvigorating gender dominance in the organisation. This was due to the fact that those individuals, primarily women, who opted into the programme were constructed as being less committed to their career and the organisation through discursively linking a long working culture to the demands and requirements of 'the client'. In the study of female accountant partners in Scotland, Gammie (2007) found that partners worked far in excess of fifty-five hours per week, which also excluded business related social activities, and were exacerbated by the requirements to travel. There was also evidence to suggest that even when flexible working practices were commonplace, there was a lack of awareness of these practices, which reflects the efforts by organisations to promote them. The harnessing of macho-cultures restricted the capacity of women to balance home and work commitments, and when flexibility options were chosen, there were negative implications on the careers of women. Lyonette and Crompton (2008) also suggest that even when women remain 'committed' to their career, the lack of change in the domestic sphere with regards to the division of household labour and child-responsibilities continues to impact detrimentally the careers of women.

In contrast to most mainstream feminist scholarship, Gallhofer et al. (2011) suggest that female accountants had expressed a preference for their work-life balance choices, rather than having been forced to take up such options as a result of structural constraints. In other words, female accountants in the study preferred to take up these options in order to, for instance, spend more time with their children. In addition, the study suggests that many of the respondents shared support with their partners in the household,

including financial, emotional and domestic duties. However, the problem with such liberal feminist studies is that it presents women as completely free agents who have made choices on their own. Such work neglects the complex ways in which inequality is ratified through broader structures and culture, and individualized. Postfeminist scholarship, therefore, plays a crucial role in delving into the reasons why women are, for instance, positioned at work as “erotic”. Thus, a more politically infused perspective is vital to understand the gendered nature of power and the social constitution of, for instance, ‘eroticism’ and ‘individual choice’.

In a postfeminist climate in which inequalities are repudiated, feminist scholars must probe the subtle ways in which discrimination operates. In the comparative study of Germany and UK, Kokot (2015) explored how female accountant partners spoke about sexism in the workplace. The study finds that German women were more inclined to describe their workplace as meritocratic and free of sexism, despite quantitative evidence showing the continued challenges faced by women. In contrast, female partners in the UK revealed structural constraints, and accounted for experiences where they had themselves challenged examples of sexism in the workplace. However, female partners based in the UK stressed the importance of the individual in manipulating structures in order to achieve success, whereas German partners pointed to the importance of relationships carving out their career paths. Drawing on the gender topology by Nentwich and Kelan (2014), Adapa et al. (2016) explore the intersection between female career success in small and medium sized firms in Australian regions. Participants spoke about ‘a continuing tradition’ with regards to male domination within the profession, and presented the problem as an intractable fact of life. The study, therefore, highlights the ‘defeatist tone’ of many of the comments given by the women, which Adapa et al. (2016) suggest could indicate the internalization of many of the existing barriers to progress. The women, for instance, raised concerns about the ‘time consuming promotion process’, ‘lack of support’, ‘lack of recognition’ they felt, lack of flexibility and less incentives.

In addition, many of the studies on the career progression of women in the accounting and finance sector tend to be rather limited in scope focusing on, for instance, specific moments or transitions in the working lives of women rather than exploring complete career trajectories (Dambrin and Lambert, 2008; Haynes, 2008). This raises interesting questions regarding how researchers capture data and whether allowing participants to talk ‘freely’ about their careers over time, might provide a richer insight into the processes of discrimination and exclusion of female accountants and financiers. This would also enable scholars to think more holistically about the movements of female accountants and financiers to identify shared structural constraints in organisations, shared experiences of them and patterns of progression over time, perhaps not too dissimilar from the work of Lupu (2012). The vast majority of studies only focus on women and do not offer a comparative approach. This would enable scholars to identify what experiences are gender specific and which are not. This raises interesting questions, for instance: What are the advantages enjoyed by men? Do any women enjoy such advantages? Are there examples of men who experience marginalisation and, if so, what are these circumstances?

Embodiment and gender

Embodiment concerns how bodies represent unique forms of identity and how they come to be socially constructed and imbued with discursive significance (Haynes, 2016). Scholarship has primarily examined the socialisation of auditors and accountants (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998; Coffey, 1993, 1994; Dirsmith et al., 1997; Harper, 1988) and the identity construction of partners (Covaleski et al., 1998; Dirsmith and Covaleski, 1985). Anderson-Gough et al. (2000), for example, explore notions of the client and client service through the socialisation of trainee accountants in a global professional services firm. Discourses on the ‘client’ occupy a central

place in these firms through, for example, recruitment and promotional materials, and internal appraisal systems (Anderson-Gough et al., 2000). These discourses have significant implications on how trainees manage their time, appearance, comportment and conduct. Thus, trainees come to understand notions of the client through the performance of ‘appropriate’ behaviours rather than through esoteric knowledge, which was traditionally more important in the profession. Discursive constructs of an omnipresent client downplay the professional independence and private and family time of trainees. Although this study and others are very useful for understanding both the pervasive and oppressive processes of enculturation in accounting firms, they do not however explicitly contend with gender (*see* Anderson-Gough et al. 2001).

Other research on embodiment in accounting and finance has looked at the uneasy tensions between technical and commercial logics. Similar to Quental and Kelan (2015), Spence and Carter (2014) examine how the embodiment of certain logics is related to success in the big, elite accounting firms. It is found that those who ascend to the very top of the firm - partnership and beyond - typically embody commercial logics. However, those who embody the technical professional logics are unlikely to climb beyond director level. There is, thus, a preference for commercial rather than technical ability in such firms. However, Spence and Carter (2014) argue that in making partner, auditors are able to embody new commercial logics whereas their subordinates are constrained by technical logics, from which the partners have been able to disembody themselves. Spence and Carter (2014) argue that there is some form of agency in the ability of auditor partners to ‘break away’ from traditional conceptions of auditors.

Kosmala and Herrbach (2006) offer a fascinating exploration into the ways in which accountants self-manage their identities through identification and distancing techniques of the self, and the adverse ethical implications over

the long-term. What appear to be dysfunctional behaviours in organisations are in fact pivotal to the effective operation of the organisation, what the authors' term 'jouissance'. Jouissance enables employees to deal with cynicism in the context of increasing commercialisation. Employees, therefore, shape and direct their own subordination through the fetishisation of authenticity, whilst continuing to fulfil their professional role. For instance, an auditor may 'misbehave' by prematurely signing off audits, which may gratify their sense of freedom. However, such behaviours may be linked to the perpetuation of serious financial crises, such as the Enron fiasco, which may indicate how employees are building their self-image in a 'plastic way' and end up neglecting ethical considerations. Thus, employees are able to perform whatever is demanded of them but dressed up in so-called professionalism.

Scholarship on the embodiment of gender in the accounting and finance profession is rather limited. Haynes (2012), for instance, explores how ideas of professionalism are inscribed onto the physical body through dress codes, body image, weight and demeanor of female accountants in the UK and US. The masculine history and cultural symbolism of the professional services firm continues to subordinate and control the bodies of men and women, and reinforce specific images of femininity and masculinity. Female accountants must carefully negotiate these expectations, hiding perceived negative aspects of femininity, whilst displaying masculine forms of embodiment in order to be perceived as 'professional'. Female accountants consciously compensated for their 'masculine' deficits, such as attempting to out-dress their male colleagues or clients, due to their perceived gender disadvantage. This can, however, be a difficult balance to strike, as women have to tread a fine line between commanding respect from their male colleagues but remaining identifiable as a woman. For example, Haynes found that women who were being too assertive were read as 'aggressive', an attribute considered inappropriate for women (ibid). Thus, women who shape their bodies to support their creditability and authority can also suffer retribution for overcompensating for their gender disadvantage. This process becomes an important way of legitimising hierarchical and unfair

views of what is considered ‘proper’ or effective behaviour in the workplace.

Other insightful work by Kamla (2012) has explored how western firms operating in Syria reinforce stereotypes on female accountants wearing the hijab. Women wore the hijab not just for religious reasons but also as a way to resist the increasing consumerist and class discriminatory economic conditions in Syria. Kamla (2012) explains, therefore, that the hijab was a form of empowerment particularly as it enabled the female accountants to overcome conservative perspectives on women working outside the home, and permitted them access to work whilst showing that they were upholding Islamic values.

In her study of restructuring and new patterns of work in the finance sector in the City of London, which was spurred on by legislative changes during the 1980s and 1990s, McDowell (1997) describes how the transmogrification of the City from a stuffy place to a place of “smooth operators” – with well groomed, muscular, and highly attractive male bodies – working in the finance sector. In particular, McDowell (1997) identifies and contrasts two iconic masculine figures – the disembodied patriarchs who sell financial advice to heads of industries and the shouting, energetic, macho traders on the trading floors. The trader job can be read as particularly constraining as it demands the performance of an aggressive, heavily sexualised man that harasses female colleagues as a way to gain the favour of their male peers. Similarly, Kerfoot and Knights (1993) analysed the emergence of competitive masculinity in the in place of paternalistic masculinity in management practices in the financial services sector in the UK, and how these discourses continued to naturalise and justify male domination in these sectors. Halford and Savage (1995) also show how contemporary restructuring in banks has a profound impact on gender relations, particularly traditional forms of masculinity. Organisations are under increasing pressure to become more modern, dynamic, and

responsive. However, an important part of restructuring concerns the shaping and preference of new employee attributes, which is resulting in new forms of masculinity. The authors hint at how masculinity is becoming more competitive which is re-inscribing male hegemony in the sector (Halford and Savage, 1995).

The remaining research on embodiment in accounting and finance is somewhat broader or contends with other dimensions of diversity. Jeacle (2003) offers a fascinating exploration into the role of accounting practices relating to the standardized garment sizing system and the emergence of 'normal' bodies. In the context of rising alteration costs, accounting practices shaped the processes and behaviours of buyers and manufacturers, and influenced them to improve the fitting of garments and reduce overheads through standardized sizing of garments that were adequately fitting. Duff and Ferguson (2011) offer a critical examination of the experiences of discrimination of disabled accountants, particularly in Big Four firms. Despite their highly technical skills, many disabled accountants in the study felt that their bodies were incongruous with perceptions of the image of the accountant. These experiences were entrenched in the highly rigid workplace practices, such as the use of certain dress codes, regimented work practices and the focus on inputs rather than outputs, meant that many individuals felt marginalised in their own roles, and their skills and competencies overlooked. The study also highlights how those with disabilities tended to move from big four firms due to these challenges and into regional firms, where many of their accommodations were met, for instance, better attitudes towards those with impairments, warmer cultures, and a more tolerable working environment, such as not having to work extended hours. Finally, Edgley et al. (2016) examine gender and race images in big four social media spaces in the UK, US and Canada. The study shows that, although homogeneity has given way to heterogeneity, there appears to be little rupture in the hegemony of these firms. The images reflect how diversity and equality have been institutionalized, as commercially and economically good, particularly in strategic and services webpages. Commercial rationales enable firms to manage diversity in ways

that do not threaten the control of the firm. For instance, the notion of ‘bringing one’s whole self to work’ underlines ideas of productivity similar to ideas of full time commitment and integrating one’s personal life into work, rather than separating them.

Neoliberalism, gender, and finance and accounting

Accounting and finance institutions have played a fundamental role in sustaining inequality and, in particular, gender inequality in society. The financial sector in the UK has generated a crisis every decade since the 1970s, which culminated in the financial collapse of 2007 and 2008. The banking sector has been the harbinger of neoliberalism with its obsession with light touch regulation and its obsessive pursuit for private profits (Knights, 2016). The collapse had its origins in the subprime mortgages of the US in which loans had been bundled into “securitised packages” of loans and sold globally. The money markets dried up and the under-capitalised banks had to be bailed out by the taxpayer to the tune of \$9.7 trillion (ibid). In the UK, subprime mortgages was not the major issue but levels of unsustainable personal debt resulting in state bailout of over £1 trillion (ibid).

Accountants and auditors were instrumental in this, as they are responsible for invigilating financial organisations in order that they provide meaningful accounts and inform shareholders and regulators of any malpractices (Sikka, 2015). The collusion and involvement of accountants in such dubious activities reflects their concern with financial success rather than their public responsibility and ethic (ibid). In the UK, accountants have a public duty as independent third party examiners of financial statements to ensure they fairly represent results, financial positions, and cash flows of their clients. However, as there is now a focus on selling work and providing value added services, accountants have to appease the demands and

perspectives of their clients rather than providing challenge and flagging legally ambiguous activities. Accountants have, therefore, often taken a more passive role in client relationships, which can comprise their discretion and autonomy as external examiners of client financial accounts (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008; Gendron 2002; McCracken et al. 2008).

The emergence of neoliberalism and its associated challenges to the profession, particularly with regards to the rise of technology and aggressive competition, have significantly impacted traditional practices. Sectors such as law, finance and accounting now have more of a commercial outlook (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008). The traditional hallmarks of the professions, such as education, vocation, esoteric knowledge, self-regulation and civility, have been displaced for client 'value added services' (Cooper et al., 1996). In other words, there is now a focus on subjective qualities such as punctuality, style, efficiency, financial success and entrepreneurialism (ibid). Robson et al. (2007) explain that the emphasis on value added services in the accounting sector is the result of declining profits in auditing. This has had implications on the status and legitimacy of auditing and, in turn, the identities that auditors bring to work (Robson et al., 2007). Professionals now undergo rigid socialization processes supported by personnel management and appraisal systems, square pegged into overarching dominant conceptions of 'the professional'.

There has been far reaching socio-politico implications of banking and accounting malpractices. In the UK, this has resulted in government backed bank bailouts and subsequent austerity measures, which have further sought to decrease further public spending during the Conservative-LibDem coalition of 2010 and 2015, and the current Conservative majority administration. It has been widely debated by womens' charities, legislators and media commentators that such cuts, such as freezing tax credits for two years, and removing housing support, have disproportionately impacted women more than men (Gayle, 2015). It has also been widely suggested that

the continuous decline in the position of the UK in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2015), which measures gender equality globally, from ninth place in 2006 to twenty-sixth place in 2015, was due to the disproportionate impact of austerity measures on women, particularly women from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The re-entrenchment of gender inequality in wider society due to accounting and banking malpractices also raises questions regarding how organisations actively shape gender within the profession. According to the World Economic Forum (2010) who used data from 20 global markets, despite women representing sixty per cent of employees in the financial services industry, only nineteen per cent of women make it to senior or leadership positions (Zahidi and Ibarra, 2010). Board and CEO representation is fewer still with women holding only fourteen per cent of board seats and two per cent of CEO positions (*ibid*). Using data from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2011), a PwC report (2013) described the ‘arc of women’s careers’ that shows how women’s representation falls dramatically between the mid-manager level and executive ranks. However, the careers of men take an opposite trajectory, increasing between these ranks. For instance, women make up fifty four per cent of all funds and trust employees but comprise of only forty two per cent of professional/technical/sales staff and forty four per cent of mid-level managers. After mid-level management, the percentage of women declines significantly to twenty six per cent at senior or executive level.

There are similar challenges regarding vertical segregation and gender in the UK. Women now make up over half of the workforce in the finance sector but only eighteen per of them are represented in managerial roles compared to thirty-five per cent of men (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009). Men hold sixty per cent of managerial, senior level and professional positions whilst women hold seventy-three per cent of administrative and secretarial jobs, and sixty-six per cent of sales and customer service roles

(ibid). This also has socio-economic repercussions for women working in the profession, for instance, the basic salary for a male accountant is £71,890 and for a woman £59,420. This means that the basic salary for women is eighty-three per cent of that of men (Mark Sattin, 2016). At the bonus level, this is even greater with men earning bonuses of 18.2% and women 13.9% of basic salary (ibid). A number of the bigger accountancy firms have now begun disclosing their gender pay, pre-empting new Government regulations. PwC in their 2014 Annual Report, for instance, disclosed a gender pay gap of 15.1 per cent. Although this compares reasonably with a UK average of 19.7%, the calculations may occlude significant pay disparities between partners.

The number of women at partner level in big four and medium sized accounting firms remains relatively small. In 2015, the average proportion of women was fifteen per cent (FRC, 2016).

Percentage of Women Partners in UK Accounting Firms

Firm	% Female Partners
PwC	17%
Deloitte	14%
KPMG	13%
EY	17%
Grant Thornton	13%
BDO	12%
RSM	17%
Mazars	13%

There are also geographical variations in the representation of women in the sector, which again could reflect the concentration of women in lower status roles. Women represent one third of jobs in central and inner London in the finance sector. This figure highlights the under-representation of women in head offices. Most banks and accounting firms in the UK are headquartered in the City of London or in Canary Wharf. The head office is where the majority of senior managers and executives are based and where the majority of strategic work takes place. Women are also underrepresented in the different accounting bodies making forty-four per cent of ACCA members and twenty-five per cent of ICAEW members.

Despite espousing a commitment to gender diversity and some evidence to suggest that they are attempting to address the issue through internal advisory councils, awards, networks and diversity initiatives and programmes, there has not been a significant shift in the representation of women at higher echelons of the profession (Jeacle, 2008). This section has also highlighted the role of accounting and finance in maintaining neoliberal ideologies, particularly through dubious practices and the aggressive pursuit of profits, rather than upholding public and ethical responsibilities regarding transparency and challenge. The broader socio-economic implications of these practices have disproportionately impacted women, particularly those from lower-socio-economic backgrounds, through government-led austerity measures, which have sought to decrease the role of the state in the provision of welfare.

Neoliberalism and women as subjects par excellence

In this section, I explore current research on the link between neoliberalism and the prevalence of individualism in the workplace. The term neoliberalism is both highly contested and conceptually multifaceted (Scharff, 2016). It is generally understood as a political and economic

rationality. Harvey (2005) describes how, before the emergence of neoliberalism, there was an economic era of 'embedded liberalism' in which the state actively intervened on industrial policy, deploying Keynesian fiscal policies and state ownership of key sectors, such as coal and steel, which alleviated the negative repercussions of economic downturns, and ensured full-time employment, growth and welfare for all citizens. However, by the 1960s, this economic era had begun to rupture as employment and inflation increased, and discontentment became widespread and socialism grew in popularity. Neoliberalism is generally understood to have emerged with the election of the Thatcher and Reagan governments, in the UK and US respectively (Duggan, 2003). Politically this represented a move away from civil rights and progressive left alliances, to a convergence of centrist liberal and right wing, 'compassionate' conservatives, who wanted to reduce welfare and drive a message that brought together ideas of liberty and economics as a way to promote capitalist gain (Ong, 2006; Wacquant, 2010). For David Harvey (2005), the deployment of rhetoric advocating individualism and liberty reflected a class project to consolidate the power of the rich and elite. This meant smaller governments, economic deregulation, deindustrialisation and the outsourcing of production to cheaper geographies (Larner, 2003). In particular, institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization enforced free market principles globally through biased trade negotiations and conditioned loans to poorer countries, which led to a further shift in wealth to the richer west (Brown, 2003).

There is a large body of theoretically oriented literature exploring how this economic shift has transformed the world of work and senses of the self, including broader reflections on social theory (Beck, 2000, Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, Bauman, 2000, Sennett, 2006, Hardt and Negri, 2000). Important themes emerging from this body of work include individualization, insecure work and the rise of technology in the workplace. The theories by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Giddens (1991) on 'individualization' and 'reflectivity' have, in particular, been explored at some length. The central idea is that reflexivity has intensified

in recent decades and altered the relationship between social structures and individual agency. It is claimed that the individual has become liberated from traditional structures and constraints, such as those pertaining to gender and kinship networks (Giddens 1991, 1998). The individual creates his or her own 'internal structures', independently from others, as a way to become agents of their own success, whilst failure is individualized and personalized. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) identified a number of specific individualisation processes operating within contemporary conditions of 'late modernity', including how: firstly, class identities have become less distinctive; secondly, inequalities have been reframed as individual crises rather than societal, and repositioned as psychological dispositions of the individual; thirdly, relations with others have been dissolved in place of personal biographies which emphasis self-responsibility, self-improvement and individual blame; and fourthly, individuals demand their own perspective and control on life, for instance, over money, time and their own bodies. Individuals therefore feel that they have *complete* agency to navigate changing economic structures, obstacles and inequalities.

Scholars have, however, been critical of aspects of the individualisation thesis. Bauman (2001) criticises it as the establishment of "de jure autonomy" rather than a "necessarily de facto one" (p.144). Capital today has cut itself loose on its dependency on local labour, which has adversely impacted the collective bargaining powers of employees, and resulted in the rise of insecure, poorly paid, low skilled, and bulimic patterns of work (Gill, 2015). Thus, processes of individualisation do not 'liberate' individuals but corrode the bonds within groups who share common concerns, anxieties and grievances and, instead, burdens the individual with these responsibilities. Feminist scholars, in particular, draw attention to how individualisation processes work to 're-traditionalise' hierarchies of power in new and subtle ways, especially around gender (Adkins, 2002). McRobbie (2004) argues that late modernity offers a new sexual contract to women, which adheres to the regulatory powers of 'pleasure seeking' by 'doing girl'. Women conform, therefore, to fashion and beauty as ways to feel liberated and

autonomous, and in doing so, foreclose the relevance of collective, feminist ideas, what Harris (2004) refers to as ‘future girls’. Scharff (2015), for instance, describes women as the neoliberal subject “par excellence” (p.4) as they have been repositioned in the economy to desire self-improvement, pampering and indulgence, which entrenches stereotypical forms of femininity as subordinating and responsive to the demands of the economy, rather than liberating them.

Much of the aforementioned literature falls under the term ‘postfeminism’. However, postfeminism is highly contested and complex to define (Gill et al., 2016). Lewis (2014) outlines three main usages of the term: firstly, ‘third wave feminism’ represents an historical or generational shift to a “sexier” form of feminism, reclaimed from the hands of both patriarchy and second wave feminists; secondly, postfeminism as a theoretical position represents an epistemological break, drawing on poststructuralist, postmodernist, and postcolonialist theories; and finally, postfeminism as a discursive ‘sensibility’, as proposed by Gill (2007a), concerns feminism as the ‘object’ of study (p.3-5). Both Gill (2007a, 2007b; 2008, 2014) and McRobbie (2007, 2009, 2015) have advanced the most systematic exposition of postfeminism as discursively produced. Gill (2007a), for instance, offers three key interrelated themes to the postfeminist sensibility: firstly, femininity as a bodily property; secondly, the shift from objectification to subjectification; thirdly, the turn to self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; fourthly, the focus on individualism and choice; penultimately, the cultural shift towards a ‘makeover’ paradigm; and finally, the resurgence of ‘natural’ sexual difference. Similarly, I understand postfeminism as concerning contemporary understandings and beliefs about gender, rather than offering a theoretical or analytical approach to gender studies.

An important facet of the postfeminist sensibility concerns how it parallels with neoliberal ideas. Gill et al. (2016) have identified three important

connections between neoliberalism and postfeminism: first, individualism dominates to the extent that the individual is not longer perceived as influenced or impacted by constraints from wider society; second, there are significant parallels between neoliberal ideas of autonomy and postfeminist ideas of self-transformation and reinvention, choice and agency; third, women more than men are commanded to reshape their subjectivity to become, for instance, more confident (p.6). Although there have been extensive debates regarding the postfeminist sensibility in feminist culture and media studies for sometime now, there has been a limited exposition of the term within organisational studies. Kelan (2008, 2009, 2010, 2014) explores how the continued existence of inequalities in ICT work and the professional services are disarticulated and seen as the failure of the individual rather than of wider organisational constraints. For example, Kelan (2008) explored how men and women make sense of insecurity. Despite the fact that the neoliberal subject is constructed as gender neutral, a masculine subtext remains which, for instance, constructs women as less at risk of redundancy in comparison to their male colleagues, and instead, gendered issues regarding balancing work and family life are constructed as related to age rather than gender. In other words, gendered inequalities are discursively redefined as age and, therefore, something that both men and women are exposed and at risk to. In her more recent study, Kelan (2014) explored the intersection of age and gender amongst younger professionals, and discovered how gender was discursively rendered invisible through how professionals link sexist behaviour to the past and previous generations, despite the fact that the men and women were aware of or had experienced it in the workplace. In sum, while inequalities continue to exist they are often not articulated as such but a failure to succeed is seen as an individual failure.

The bulk of research at the intersection of neoliberalism and postfeminism falls broadly into two distinct bodies of work. Although there is some work exploring the interconnections between postfeminism, neoliberalism and the workplace (cf. Gill, 2002, 2007a, 2007b; Kelan, 2008, 2009, 2014; Lewis, 2014; Scharff, 2015a, 2015b; Walkerdine et al., 2001), the majority of the

scholarship outlined emanates from culture and media studies but, nevertheless, provides important clues and questions for organisational scholars regarding these complex relations. The first body is Foucauldian inspired and seeks to connect ideas regarding institutional processes, power and gender and, in particular, the idea of women as the neoliberal subject par excellence. Key themes emerging from this work include the importance of auditing cultures (Davies, 2005; Power, 1994; Strathern, 2000), intensive self-surveillance and monitoring, self-help and self-transformation (Bröckling, 2005; Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006), how power and empowerment are invoked in adverts to consume products (Koffman et al., 2015; Lazar, 2006), the shaping of subjectivities as entrepreneurial (Scharff, 2015b), the idea of lives and careers as an outcome of planning and 'compulsory choice' (Cronin, 2000; Rose, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001) and the illusion of autonomy (Barley and Kunda, 2004; Gonick 2001).

Broadly speaking, Foucauldian-inspired feminist work conceptualises power as moving through the individual with the intention of reshaping them as calculating and measured entrepreneurial subjects, who are able to meet their own needs and desires (Brown, 2003; Harris 2004; Rose, 1989). The government is able to 'govern at a distance' through 'experts' who are responsible for educating, managing and motivating the actions and judgements of individuals (Rose and Miller, 1992). An important aspect in the self-actualisation of the 'entrepreneur' is exercising choice in consumerist practices as a form of expression (Rose, 1989). Identity and life become defined through the accumulation of choices, experiences, pleasures, and the attainment of 'happiness' and sex (Barry et al., 1996). Monetisation discourses of 'profit' and 'loss', in particular, have played a significant role in the inscription of power and shapes the individual subject similar to that of a corporation (McNay, 2009). However, the idea that becoming an autonomous subject under neoliberalism through consumerist choices is 'delusionary' (Gonick 2001, p. 204) as the subject becomes precariously dependent on money for their own sense of self (Cronin, 2000; Davies, 2005).

The second body of literature is much smaller and psychoanalytically inflected, and concerns the psychosocial effects of neoliberalism, particularly themes such as the repudiation of dependencies and anxiety. Walkerdine et al. (2001) explores how becoming feminine in middle class families required significant investments, including going to the right school and having the right boyfriend. The pressure and terror from potentially falling off the edge of middle class life and culture resulted in significant anxiety for the young women, including cases of anorexia and hair pulling. Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008), drawing on UK makeover television programmes, theorise the 'abject' as a site that constitutes what middle class femininity is not. The programmes present working class femininity as tasteless, unintelligent, visually repugnant and immoral. 'Psychology' and 'self-brand' experts attempt to call, crush and make over working class female bodies into middle class subjects, which Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008) suggest offers insights into the logics of improvement within neoliberalism. In contrast to middle class girls who had access to advice and financial support, the longitudinal study by Lucey et al. (2003) on the transition of young working class women into university and with the prospect of professional, middle class careers, reveals a lonelier and more unstable path in comparison to middle class young women. Working class women showed psychic defenses in their unwillingness to ask their parents for help, and also experienced shame as a result of wanting to improve and have a better life than their parents. Finally, Roseneil (2009) shows how, despite the radically individualizing society in which we live, the case of Ben highlights how subjectivities are ghosted by others. Although Ben describes himself as self-reliant and autonomous, Roseneil (2009) explains how his narratives reveal how these characteristics were taught to him by his father. Paradoxically, therefore, his 'self-reliant' character is bound up in his relationship with his father.

There is more literature exploring similar issues, including insecurity, anxiety, stress and depression, but again this tends to be from a Foucauldian

perspective. Hall and O'Shea (2013) explore how the structural outcomes of neoliberalism, including workplace targets and appraisals, and the 'privatisation of public troubles', has paralleled the emergence of depression and anxiety, which are perceived as the fault of the individual. Those who seek help and government welfare are, consequently, demonized and hated. Drawing on 158 online responses to a report on the proposed UK government benefits caps in a tabloid newspaper, Hall and O'Shea (2013) show how neoliberal discourses pertaining to meritocracies attempt to position the article as 'common sense' and neoliberalism as a success. Ehrenreich (2009) explores the idea of compulsory optimism implied by 'happiness' discourses, and how the field of 'positive psychology' has close ties with businesses and neo-conservative, right wing political movements. Binkley (2011) explores how happiness discourses perform an important role in the contemporary therapeutic culture in shaping autonomous, 'agentic' neoliberal subjectivities. The paper highlights how government rationalities cultivate and maximise particular affective potentials of individuals.

Although this oeuvre of work provides rich accounts and profound questions, it is not largely concerned with workers or organisations. The research also tends to be rather theoretically oriented (cf. Davies 2005; Hall and O'Shea, 2013; McNay, 2009) or relies on textual readings rather than empirical data collected from the field (cf. Binkley, 2011; Bröckling, 2005), and tends to engage with neoliberalism and subjectivity from a purely Foucauldian perspective (cf. Bröckling, 2005; Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Hall and O'Shea, 2013; Koffman et al., 2015; Lazar, 2006). Although there is work on the psychosocial effects of neoliberalism, this research is rather slim and, similarly, does not contend, in general, with subjects within the workplace. In particular, there is a lacuna of research on the psychic life of the neoliberal subject. The idea of the psychic life is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 but, in short, concerns how neoliberalism is registered, negotiated and lived out at the scale of the subject at work. Scharff (2015b) explores the psychic life of the entrepreneurial musician and describes the anxieties and self-doubt emerging from the precarious nature of the

profession. Similarly, Gill (2009), drawing on autobiographical evidence and conversations, documents the chronic anxiety, 'toxic shame', long hours and the temporary, precarious nature of work emerging in the academic profession.

Reviewing both the literature on the finance and accounting sector and media studies, little has been said about the texture of neoliberal life in the finance and accounting sector, and how it is lived out and felt. Foucauldian inspired feminist scholars have explored how subjectivities are reconstituted under neoliberalism, and how public discourses have positioned women as the ideal entrepreneurial subject, especially in culture and media studies (Gill and Scharff, 2011). In comparison, however, the literature on gender in accounting and finance appears to be somewhat complicit rather than critical of how women are positioned in the workplace (Adapa et al., 2016; Kokot, 2015). Therefore, some of the literature in accounting and finance appears trapped within the neoliberal paradigm (Gill, 2008). For instance, describing the reasons why women take up particular work-balance options over others or noting how women perceive themselves as less confident than men in the workplace, completely sidesteps complex questions regarding the relationship between broader, contemporary economic and cultural rationales and how they interconnect with subjectivity. In other words, much of the literature takes such questions and conditions "for granted" rather than identifying and critiquing the conditions that give rise to issues regarding, for instance, confidence or work-balance

Moreover, there is a lacuna of research in the accounting and finance literature regarding the psychosocial effects of neoliberalism and how it 'gets inside' or is introjected into the subject, transforming subjectivities and relations with oneself and others at work. For instance, in what ways are aspects of working lives in the accounting and finance sector, such as the intensification and extensification of work, precariousness, reputation, and one's passionate attachments to work, managed? What senses are evoked in

the workplace such as paranoia, shame, and guilt? By turning to consider deeper, psychic mechanics and states in accounting and finance, scholars can understand *how* and *why* neoliberalism gets inside subjects (Gill, 2009; Scharff, 2011, 2012, 2015b; Walkerdine, 2003).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that current studies on the experiences of women and men in finance and accounting have largely ignored how neoliberal rationales get inside employees, shaping their subjectivities and relational ties (Adapa et al., 2016; Kokot, 2015). As such, much of the literature currently sidesteps more profound questions regarding how women are positioned as neoliberal subjects in comparison to men, and how this leads to particular challenges for women (Gill, 2009; Scharff, 2011, 2012, 2015b; Walkerdine, 2003). It is important to get beyond the “taken for granted” to understand the psychic life of power under neoliberalism and the inconspicuous ways in which the economic rationales shape tropologically the “shared” psyche of subjects. This would provide scholars with a view of how subjectivities are constructed from the “ground-up” constructions, and how this reconnects with broader, circulating neoliberal discourses.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework: Butler, discourse analysis and psychoanalysis

In Chapter 2, I traced the literature at the intersection of postfeminism and neoliberalism. I also examined existing research on gender in the accounting and finance profession. It was argued that, with few exceptions, there has been little engagement on the texture of neoliberal life and its psychosocial effects in the gender and accounting and finance literature. Moreover, there is something of a lacuna of research on the psychic life of subjects in the profession. This chapter explores the theories required to investigate and understand some of the gaps in the postfeminist and accounting and finance literature. The chapter attempts this by bringing together a number of different bodies of work, namely ideas on gender performativity, grief, non-violent action by Judith Butler, discourse analysis and psychoanalytical work on ‘emotional investments’. Overall, through the imbrication of these distinct bodies of work, the chapter attempts to provide a framework to understand how subjectivities are shaped by and resist ‘individualistic’, neoliberal forces in the workplace.

The first sections of the chapter give a detailed account of the theory of gender performativity by Butler and how this underpins her later, broader concerns with precarious lives, grief and relational ethics. The intention of these sections is not to trace the complete oeuvre of Butler but, instead, to draw out relevant aspects of her theories to the research and show how they interconnect. Although these theories are fundamental to the research in terms of understanding the construction of gender, Butler’s work has been

subject to much criticism for neglecting the intricacies and vibrancies of how identities are accomplished in day-to-day interactions and talk. The chapter, therefore, explores how discourse analysis can be used in conjunction with the work of Butler to provide the practical tools required to investigate empirically the ideas presented by Butler. However, discourse analysis has been criticised by psychoanalysts for discursive determinism and, in particular, failing to consider important aspects of subject development, such as *why* individuals come to take up certain identity positions in discourse over time. This has often given rise to heated exchanges between leading psychoanalytical and discourse theorists. Despite this, the chapter argues that there are in fact many congruencies between the two practices and by drawing on psychoanalytical concepts, such as emotional investments, discourse analysts can enrich their understanding of the construction of subjectivities over time. Moreover, psychoanalytical work on emotional investments provides an important framework for interpreting how subjects achieve the capacity to care, which chimes with Butlerian thinking on non-violent action and relational ethics, and directly contradicts neoliberal ‘individualising’ forces in the workplace.

Gender performativity, melancholia, grief and non-violent action

Gender performativity and the psychic life of power

While there have been important earlier ethnomethodological inspired theories offered by West and Zimmerman (1987) regarding ‘doing gender’, the work of Judith Butler on performativity and materiality has put forward a highly influential poststructuralist reconceptualization on gendered subjectivity. The implication of this theory was a more fluid and unstable understanding of gender as both “done” and “undone”. This dynamism contrasts with the work of West and Zimmerman (1987) who tend to study gender as omnirevelent and reproduced in every context (i.e. one cannot escape doing

gender) in which the researcher is concerned more with understanding the persistence of inequality rather than, for instance, its subversion or forms of resistance.

There has been much debate on the significance of gender performativity by Butler (Brickell, 2005; Lloyd, 1999; McIlvenny, 2002a), I summarise it in the following ways. Gender performativity problematises essentialist claims that sex determines gender, and that gender is somehow ‘natural’ and ‘internal’. Butler (1990) explains that gender is constituted through highly stylised and iterative bodily ‘acts’. These acts form part of a long continuum or chain of acts over time. However, acts never emerge in quite the same way as previous ones and, therefore, vary temporally as subjects always fall short of fulfilling the full requirements of previous acts (Butler, 1993). Although subjects may not recognise variances in gender accomplishment, the citational nature of acts means that differences between acts are concealed, which gives a sense of stability and continuity in gender performance, despite its ‘tenuous constitution over time’ (Butler, 1990: 191). Butler argues that, despite this covering up, there remains space to repeat acts in new ways and recite subjecthood differently.

Acts do not emerge in isolation but reflect the operation of a much broader, proscriptive symbolic order, which Butler (1990) terms the ‘heterosexual matrix’. Butler explains that the purpose of the heterosexual matrix is to construct recognisable and intelligible bodies in order to maintain heterosexuality by dividing people into either one of two genders. Discursive acts, pertaining to social norms and categories, such as ‘boy’ and ‘girl’, exist prior to the inauguration of the subject into the matrix. The subject, as Butler states, is *already* a ‘subject’ before entering the matrix, which means that the subject in effect pre-exists the interpellation of the subject into the heterosexual matrix. The body then undergoes a process of discursive signification in which the body is materialised and the sense of a fixed morphological boundary and surface is produced (Butler, 1988). Thus,

discourse refers to what is material and, what is material, cannot avoid discursive signification. In the case of gendered and sexed subjectivities, when a body is hailed at birth as, for instance, a baby girl, the girl will be expected to perform and embody continuously a number of acts that render her intelligible as a girl, such as the application of make-up or playing with a doll (Butler, 1993). Therefore, a body labelled 'girl' is not something one 'is' but something that one continuously has to become and 'do' through a process of conferring social categories and, in turn, the negotiation and assumption of these within the heterosexual matrix.

Bodies do not enter the heterosexual matrix on their own accord but are commanded, or what Butler terms 'interpellated', to do so, a term she adopts from the work of Althusser (1989). Butler explains that discursive acts reflect the requirements of power and when bodies are interpellated into the heterosexual matrix and forced to take up pre-configured social categories, subjects are initiated and by default of this, sustain the dynamics of power within the existing symbolic order. Therefore, interpellations are perlocutionary speech acts, as they have a force beyond the literal meaning of the words enunciated, rendering bodies subjects of their interpellator (Butler, 1997b). In the case of a policeman hailing a man on the street, the policeman represents the law and by implication power, and by hailing another, the command binds the law onto whom it hails. Interpellations do not just provide the condition of existence but also shape the trajectory of desire for the subject. As Butler (1990) explains, 'bodies incorporate the law and come to signify it' and the law, therefore, "manifest[s] as the essence of their selves, meaning of their *soul*, their *conscience*, the law of *desire*" (Butler, 1990: 134-35) [italics added]. Power achieves this through the prohibition and foreclosure of what the subject desires within the matrix. The repudiation of what is desired causes trauma and sets off a neurotic repetition, and the need to regain the desire(s) that have been lost. The subject, therefore, becomes libidinally invested in this doubling back of desire, as it provides pleasure and the promise of existence. Subject formation can, thus, be seen as paradoxical in that, whilst subordinating the

individual, the subject is also simultaneously dependent on power for existence and desire (Butler, 1997b).

The iterative nature of discursive acts, however, means that they are vulnerable to both psychic and temporal change. Butler contemplates questions of agency primarily through her exploration of the psychic form that power takes within the heterosexual matrix. When bodies are interpellated into the matrix and the psyche of the subject is sublimated, subjects do not automatically wield power or agency. A process of concealment occurs as the subject eclipses the power of the interpellation and the conditions of its own emergence with a different order of power and agency. This gives the impression that the subject does not belong to a prior order of power. Thus, power is eclipsed with 'power' and the subject comes to possess agency, which is the paradoxical effect of interpellation into the heterosexual matrix. However, the effect of power on the subject is not a straight transference but differential, and Butler terms the unknown implications of power, 'psychic excess'. Psychic excess is that part of the psyche that remains following the sublimation and initiation of the subject, and signifies the limits of normalisation conferred to the subject through discourse and power. It represents, therefore, the ability of the subject to resist power and subvert the social categories conferred onto it. The ambivalence resulting from the effect of power, as a form of resistance and recuperation of power, works to bind and form the agency of the subject.

Melancholia, violence, and relational ethics

When a body is compelled into the heterosexual matrix, Butler explains that it recoils in the face of the power of the interpellator, and turns against itself through repudiation, melancholia, hatred and moral reflexivity. The initiated subject turns against itself in a guilty embrace of the power that seeks to subordinate it. As subjects require subordination to be initiated, they become

passionately attached to the power that seeks to command it. As the subject recoils, the ego is divided from the object and the passionate attachment is introjected, and lost into the ego. The attachment moves from one of passion and love to one of hate. The internalisation process, however, creates a moral reflexivity, whereby the ego is split in order to furnish an internal view, which enables the subject to judge itself. However, melancholia refuses to acknowledge the loss and seeks to preserve the lost object as psychic effects. The barred object does not simply vanish but is phantasmatically preserved in the form of a bodily ego, as the body takes on a gendered morphology, which represents a sort of 'truism'. The melancholic response to loss and the phantasmatic position that desire takes through its encraption on bodily surfaces, indicates how such transfigurations are the result of desires for external objects to the body rather than their cause. Thus, this again works to trouble traditional ideas of gender and sexual subjectivities as emerging from internal dispositions. Despite these psychic dynamics, the body is able to conceal its genealogy and present itself as seamless and fixed, which highlights the importance of power and discourse in the signification of the body as more than just a 'material' surface.

Butler explores this point by explaining the importance of melancholic gender, particularly early on in the psychic development of children. Butler argues that the prohibition on incest presupposes the prohibition on homosexuality. The oedipal conflict presumes that heterosexual desire has already been accomplished and that the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality has been enforced. Butler problematises this and argues that if heterosexuality is naturalised on the existence of homosexuality then heterosexuality is formed through the ungrievable loss of the homosexual cathexis. The identification as heterosexual is a double disavowal, therefore, as it includes both the prohibition and desire. Butler is arguing here that gender is the melancholic response to the prohibited desire of the same-sex parent. The prohibited desire and its lost attachment are introjected and installed in the ego.

When lost attachments of desire cannot be grieved, violence can emerge in its wake. Butler (2004) highlights this by drawing on the example of how, following the death of homosexual men from AIDS during the 1980s and the 9/11 terror attacks, there was a deficit of public discourses to express these lost lives. Butler explains that ‘ungrievable’ lives cannot be mourned as they have already been lost and no longer ‘exist’. ‘Grievability’ is, therefore, only applicable to lives that have lived or have an anterior ending. Thus, grief refers to what *is* life and what it is not. When such lives become visible, violent impulses can emerge which seek to eliminate the continued existence of these lives, as they are perceived to be in a ‘state of deadness’. The compulsion to inflict violence emerges from a sense that such objects are inexhaustible, and as a way of reinvigorating a fantasy of a former orderly world. For instance, if a homosexual men expresses desire or affection publically, this may panic heterosexuality through exposing the disorderliness and inconsistency of existence within the heterosexual matrix. Bodies that have the power to trouble are, what Butler terms, ‘precarious lives’ as they are vulnerable to both physical and ethical violence.

‘Precariousness’ refers to how we are constituted relationally with others. Although we have rights to our own our bodies, Butler (2009a) suggests that they are never quite our own, as they are given over to and impinged upon by the other. Gender, for instance, is not the ‘possession’ of the subject but a *dispossession* by the other, as subjects are interpellated to take up social norms against their will. However, people do not realise this and believe in ideas of dependence and agency. The subject’s relations with others, therefore, leaves them exposed to ‘social vulnerability’, in terms of desire, loss, and grief, but also ‘physical vulnerability’ due to the corporeality of the body, which underscores the finitude of life. This does not mean that precariousness is somehow evenly distributed. Institutional and organisational structures create precarity in terms of who has access to protection and the conditions for continued existence. The conditions for a ‘liveable’ life may depend on, for instance, the bodily morphology of a subject. This means that some lives are *more* precarious than others and,

therefore, more exposed to violence, displacement, harassment, and discrimination.

Butler explains that being mindful of this vulnerability can be the basis for non-violence. As a divergence from a narcissistic preoccupation with melancholia, Butler offers an ethic to protect others from the kinds of violence that one has *already* endured. Despite our differences, Butler argues that loss creates a ‘we’ as everyone *has* lost, and therefore, desired and loved. Butler attempts to connect such vulnerability and precariousness to corporeal interdependency and relationality with others in order to open up new ways of recognizing others, which are non-violent and reciprocal (Butler, 2001; 2005; 2007). Butler explores the ideas of vulnerability and relationality through discussing the importance of ‘dependency’ and ‘addressivity’ in the accounts given by subjects. First, Butler explains that when a subject gives an account of itself, it must be addressed by another. The demand to give an account *of* oneself *to* another, as a way to justify oneself and actions, problematizes the self-narrating “I”. The “I” does not simply emerge in the social world through self-will. The “I” is instead formed as a response *of* and *to* others, and this works to condition and initiate subjectivities. Thus, Butler is arguing that one cannot exist without the address of the other and without, in turn, addressing the other. The address by the other interrupts the sense of an account as belonging exclusively to the subject. The subject is compelled to relinquish their account to the other and, therefore, the subject is dispossessed in relation to the other. Secondly, Butler argues that dependency is also implied in the accounts given by the “I” within the structure of address, which obscures the sense of the self as contained and knowable. The subject cannot give an account of itself without including the events, discourses and its relations with others that preceded the subject. As one commences an account, the “I” can start with itself but the narrative will very quickly become inconsistent and variable, as the subject realizes that it has no story of its own and the “I” is, instead, a narrative of relations over time (please see Chapter 4 for methodological implications).

Butler highlights the paradoxical nature of ‘dependency’ and ‘addressivity’. First, the “I” is dispossessed by the conditions conferred onto it by the address but, simultaneously, the “I” requires this address for recognition and initiation. Second, although the “I” commences a narrative with itself, it becomes clear quite quickly that the self is imbricated and bound in relations with others. The “I” is, therefore, in a sense, unknowable, opaque to itself. If the “I” is unrecognizable to itself then the other is also unrecognizable to *itself*. The idea of mutual opacity ‘troubles’ the sense of coherence and consistency generated by discursive regimes of truth. Third, Butler explains how our interdependency on the other carries with it psychic affects such as melancholy, anxiety and grief. These psychic affects expose the fallacious sense of oneself as autonomous and individual, and instead, reveals how the “I” is deeply imbricated in relations with others, who are similarly vulnerable. Thus, the “I” is not only vulnerable to the psychic affects of loss, pain and grief, but the “I” realizes how it may impinge on others and reproduce violence.

Butler suggests that these paradoxes are not failures but can open up ethical valences around humility and non-violent action. Firstly, self-opacity displaces the expectation that others will be transparent. Thus, one cannot demand that others are coherent, as this would neglect the inconsistent nature of the self, and may result in a fabricated narrative. Secondly, the ontological claim by Butler that there is no subject without the other raises an ethical demand *for* the other (Butler, 2005). The subject is given over from the start to others, and is always disrupted by others which prevents continuity (Butler, 2004a). One’s formation, thus, implicates the Other in the subject, which connects the subject *to* others. Thus, if one forecloses its prior formation and the proximity of others in an attempt to construct an exclusively autonomous self, then the subject is covering up the conditions of its own existence. Thirdly, when we experience violence, loss and grief, through injustice, displacement or hate speech, we often seek to banish our grief through further violence in the perceived name of justice, and in the

restoration of an imagined, orderly world. However, Butler argues that when we are subjected to violence and loss, our ties with others are, instead, delineated rather than breached or attacked. When one is subjected to violence, this offers the opportunity to reflect on the injury that one has endured, and in turn, reflect on others whose lives depend on oneself and, in turn, on which one's life depends. In such states of powerlessness, one is recalled of one's own vulnerability and that of others. Butler is at pains to stress that this is not inaction but identification with the suffering of others (Butler, 2004).

Fourthly, Butler explains that non-violence can be located in how the body affectively responds its environment. The body responds to its context through affects including rage, pleasure, suffering and hope. It is this 'coming up against' the world that defines the body and how it responds. Butler (2009a) explains that affects are mediated, called and enacted by discursive or interpretative frames of understanding. The affective response of the subject therefore opens up the "affective conditions" for potential challenges and critiques (p.34). Finally, Butler (2009a) explains that, as we are formed in a "...mired in violence", a struggle opens which presents "...the possibility of non-violence" (p.171). Although the subject is commanded into the heterosexual matrix, it does not mean that the subject is under duress to repeat loyally such acts of violence. The iterative nature of discursive acts affirms how the body is continuously being produced in perhaps new and subversive ways. However, those who attempt to disavow violence, perhaps through some attempt at moral responsibility, run the risk of morally legitimising it by relocating their persecution onto the other, and denying the injury. It is precisely the avowal of violence that enables the individual to reshape their rage and aggression in ways that protect precarious lives.

Bringing together the theory of gender performativity, precarious lives and relational ethics

It is clear from the previous section that Butlerian scholarship has evolved and broadened out over time from a relatively narrow focus on gender performativity to a broader concern with 'precarious lives', precarity and the affective conditions required for 'braking' violent acts. At first glance, the theories of gender performativity, precarious lives and relational ethics appear to be distinct and relatively incompatible, but this is not the case. Indeed, I want to highlight how gender performativity, or at least 'subjecthood' performativity, in its slightly broader sense, continues to underpin her later theories, forming the 'mechanics' of how, for instance, one begins to reconsider the frames by which one recognises others.

The theory of gender performativity concerns the constitution of bodies by iterative discursive acts. However, bodies are never able to fulfil the requirements of each act, which means that subjects perform gender in different ways. Despite these variances, the citational nature of acts means that gender appears 'natural', seamless and 'internal'. The process takes place within a highly proscriptive system, the heterosexual matrix. The matrix represents the operation of power and works to prohibit and foreclose certain desires, which renders some bodies recognisable whilst, by default, rendering others unrecognisable and invisible. In response to the prohibition and the loss of objects of desire, the subject recoils in melancholia and recrimination. As the lost object cannot exist in the external world, it will continue to exist 'internally' as a bodily ego, encrypted upon the surface of the body. Although power subordinates and sublimates the psyche, it also paradoxically initiates the body as a 'subject' and there is a transfer of power and agency to the subject. However, the effects of power are differential and unintended, which means that the subject is opened up to psychic and temporal change. Thus, in common parlance, subjects emerge

melancholically within the heterosexual matrix, continuously shaped and interpellated, but open to change and subversion.

Butler attempts to link melancholic subjectivities with the inability of 'society' to mourn the lives of others. Those who are not recognised represent the object of one's lost desire. Butler explains that 'grief' can only be felt for lives that are understood to have lived or have an ending in the future anterior. When 'unliveable' lives become visible, they wield the 'power' to panic the coherence of the matrix, which can leave them vulnerable to both ethical and worse still, physical violence. Butler terms these ungrievable lives 'precarious'. Organisations and institutions within the heterosexual matrix drive precarity, which structures who has access to protection from discrimination and hate speech, and the conditions required for corporeal existence and persistence. Gender performativity is linked to notions of precariousness and precarity, as subjects who do not live their lives in recognisable ways, as defined by the heterosexual matrix, are at greater risk of suffering displacement, violence, harassment and discrimination. Thus, the limits of precariousness and precarity are contoured from and sustained through the operation of power and its psychic life within the heterosexual matrix.

However, due to the iterative nature of discursive acts, subjects are not 'quite' under duress to recite acts that inflict violence on others. For Butler this comes primarily through ambivalence in which the subject acknowledges that they *can* inflict violence on others. Butler explains that this can enable subjects to reshape and redirect their aggression in ways that protect the other. Subjects who, conversely, attempt to disavow both their own vulnerability and violence, run the risk of relocating their persecution *onto* others. Butler explains that it is precisely as one is mired in violence that relations of dependency, interdependency and vulnerability with others are delineated. Butler resists the idea that she is presenting an ethical framework but, at the very least, she is calling subjects to reconsider how

they recognise and treat others, as a way of working towards a more collective 'we'. The ideas on relational ethics fit with gender performativity as, for instance, when a subject is interpellated as a man or a woman during the course of their existence, they can become disoriented and dispossessed. The subject may ask, what does it mean to be a man or a woman? How does one accomplish gender in ways that are recognisable to ensure a 'liveable' life? What happens if one fails to do gender appropriately? Therefore, the call for a 'we' by Butler opens up opportunities to critique and rebuke the interpretative frames by which subjects are deemed recognisable and unrecognisable within the heterosexual.

Discourse Analysis

In the last section, I brought together some of the central tenets of Butlerian scholarship, from her earlier, more narrow concern with gender performativity, to her more recent preoccupations with the conditions and persistence of precarious lives, and relational ethics. At the end of the last section, I also brought together these apparent disparate concepts to show how the theory of gender performativity underpins and runs through all of Butler's subsequent work. There is no doubt that Butler's work and, in particular, her theory of gender performativity, have been hugely influential on academic feminism over the last two decades. Despite this, Butler has been subjected to criticism, particularly from scholars who take a more ethnomethodological perspective on understanding gender and subjectivities, for not reflecting the complexities and intricacies of how gendered subjectivities are *actually* accomplished in everyday situations (McNay, 1999; Speer and Potter, 2001). Despite this, there has been an increasing engagement by scholars with Butlerian theory, which reflects the prominence of both 'post-structuralist' inclined theory and more traditional ethnomethodological approaches in the field (Nentwich and Kelan, 2014).

I argue in this section, however, that discourse analysis can be effectively used in conjunction with theories such as gender performativity, as it can provide the practical tools required to investigate empirically the construction of gender and identity through language and talk. Although there are overlaps between Butlerian scholarship and discourse analysis, such a combination has rarely been used in the field (McIlvenny, 2002a; Scharff, 2011). Therefore, the aim of this section is to explore discourse analysis and delineate the complementary facets of gender performativity *and* discourse analysis. By bringing both together, I argue that scholars can create an effective framework to denaturalise gender construction in organisations through analysing how it is constituted in language (Billig, 1999; Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998a). Thus, discourse analysis can tell us about the construction of identity, the use and intention of language, and about the sources of the order and patterning in social constructions (Wetherell, 2005a).

Discourse analysis approach

Discourse analysis is a hotly contested and challenging area of scholarship to define (Gill, 2007a). As Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest, ‘the only thing all commentators agree on with regards to the definition of discourse analysis is that terminological confusions abound’ (p.6). Discourse analysis emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a challenge to the then dominant positivist paradigm in psychology, which used cognitive psychological approaches to claim objective knowledge of the world (Parker, 2012). However, discourse analysts argued that psychologists, rather than attempting to study static, internal cognitive states, should instead focus on the role of language in sense making (Gergen, 1985). Thus, discourse analysis has become popular in a number of disciplines outside of Psychology including Geography, Sociology, Anthropology and Linguistics. It has, consequently, branched off into a variety of approaches including critical linguistics, social semiotics, ethnomethodology and conversation

analysis, speech act theory and a number of poststructuralist approaches to texts and history (Gill, 2007a). However, scholars who apply the term ‘discourse analysis’ have been heavily criticised for their uniform use of the term, despite the theoretical nuances between the difference approaches (Speer, 2005; Taylor, 2001). Building out from this point, the first part of this section traces the key branches of discourse analysis before explaining the type of discourse analysis, as espoused by Wetherell, Billig and Edley, adopted by this study.

Speer (2005) identifies two main fields within discourse analysis, which is a useful way to conceptualise this complex area. First, ‘critical discursive approaches’ are informed by post-structuralism including the work of Foucault (1951, 1972), positioning theory (Davies and Harre, 1990), the Frankfurt School of critical theory (Habermas, 1984), the philosophies of Derrida (1976) and Wittgenstein (1953) and psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1989). Discourse analysts have combined one or more of these approaches to create unique types of discourse analysis. However, broadly speaking, the focus of discourse analysts is to examine talk and texts as a way to uncover unequal power arrangements and ideologies, and how discourses shape and constrain individuals (Speer, 2005). They attempt to do this through the identification of broad systems of meaning in talk, practical ideologies, interpretative repertoires, and wider patterns of sense making (*ibid*).

The second type of discourse analysis identified by Speer (2005) falls under the term ‘discursive approaches’, which are informed by ethnomethodology and conversational analysis. Ethnomethodology, developed in the work of Garfinkel (1967), considers the taken-for-granted verbal and non-verbal conduct of people as they go about their everyday lives, and later began to be employed in institutional and organisational contexts. Conversational analysis emerged from the work of Sacks during the 1960s and also has roots in ethnomethodology, as well as Goffman (1983) and the linguistic philosophers, Austin (1962) and Wittgenstein (1953). Conversational

analysts are concerned with how participants produce and orient themselves to social order as they interact with one another (Speer, 2005). This requires close readings of the transcripts to identify individual utterances, organisational turns, and broader sequences of utterances (Parker, 2013).

Another related discursive approach emerged later on in the 1980s as defined by Potter and Wetherell (1987). This approach applied ideas taken from ethnomethodology, conversational analysis, linguistic philosophy and the sociology of scientific knowledge (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Speer, 2005). Discourse analysis in this field focuses on talk and texts as social practices and the discursive resources that individuals draw on in talk (Potter, 1996). Analysts seek to understand how language is constructed and what its implications are (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Potter and Wetherell (1987) identify a number of components to the approach. First, language has a *function* which means that people use language as a way *to do* things such as, accuse, persuade or request (p.32). Thus, language can be rhetorically structured depending on the objective of the speaker. However, this function is not always explicit, for example, there are direct and indirect ways to ask someone for something. Therefore, discourse analysts focus on reading the context to understand fully why particular discourses emerge. Second, discourse “is constructed and constructive” (p.35) which means that people use language to construct multiple versions of the social world. This highlights how participants draw on different pre-existing discourses in different contexts (p.34). Third, ‘discourse as topic’ refers to how discourse analysts view language as manufactured during interaction rather than reflecting some internal cognitive state. Analysts agree that discourses change over space and time and the objective is to understand the different discursive structures employed by individuals. Thus, fourth, discourses are seen as *varied*, which challenges traditional assumptions regarding how attitudes and beliefs remain consistent over space and time.

There has been a schism in recent years within this branch of discourse analysis between the conversational analysis and ethnomethodological inspired approaches espoused by Potter, Hepburn and Speer, and the poststructuralist approach by Wetherell, Billig and Edley (McIlvenny, 2002a; Scharff, 2008, 2011; Speer, 2005). One of the main reasons for this schism concerns whether research should use an etic approach, whereby a frame of reference is imposed, or an emic approach, which draws on the conceptual framework of those studied (Scharff, 2008). Whereas Wetherell, Edley and Billig advocate etic forms of analysis, Potter and Speer prefer emic approaches. The approach, now advocated by Potter and others, aligns more with the work of Harvey Sacks and analyses interactions at a very granular level or 'ground up' micro analysis, for example, in the details of pauses, turn-taking, hesitations and word choices (Speer, 2005). Feminist scholars are critical of this approach, as it does not account for the ways in which gender norms and power structures exert themselves on verbal and non-verbal actions (Speer, 2005). There is a risk, therefore, that paying close attention to the micro-practices of everyday life may inadvertently reproduce hegemonic power, belief systems and attitudes and position them as 'natural' or 'normal' (McIlvenny, 2002b). It is, therefore, important to examine the cultural context in which talk and action take place in order to identify not just the broader operation of power, but also as a way to engender progressive change within different contexts and locales (Wetherell, 1998a). Indeed, as McIlvenny (2002a) claims, separating out such pervasive 'political' issues may result in "naïve empiricism" (p.111). Thus, this research takes an etic approach similar to Wetherell, as social categories such as gender, although not always explicitly oriented to, significantly influence how one interacts with others within a social context (Wetherell, 2000). This more fragmented and less monolithic view of language and the focus instead on interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas, allows the analysts to account for variability and complexity in the accounts given by research participants. In addition, there are also significant overlaps between the theory of performativity, agency, subjectivity, and power by Butler and the type of discourse analysis espoused by Margaret Wetherell, which is addressed next.

Discourse analysts employ a specific concept called the ‘interpretative repertoire’. This can be understood as the building blocks that speakers use in talk. They consist of lexicons, metaphors, verbal images and figures of speech that individuals can draw on to characterise or evaluate actions and events (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988). The repertoire is also a resource for the discourse analyst to identify recurring patterns of discourses and, therefore, how individuals and groups make sense of their world (E K Kelan, 2009; Wetherell, 1998b, 2005a). Potter and Wetherell (1987) took the term from the study of scientific discourses by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), who highlighted how scientists consensually and contextually organise ‘concrete’, ‘detached’ and ‘rational’ forms scientific knowledge. For example, the scientists used ‘empiricist repertoires’ which highlighted the rational, theoretical aspects of their findings in formal settings, but informally, they used ‘contingent repertoires’ to highlight the importance of speculation, chance and intuition in scientific exploration (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984). Therefore, interpretative repertoires can be employed with a particular function, for instance, to accuse, justify, persuade or problematise the position of others.

Interpretative repertoires can open up conflicting discursive positions termed *ideological dilemmas*. Billig (1998) develop ideology as something that is lived in, multiple and variable. As Kelan (2009) explains, “the assumption is that common sense knowledge contains various contradictory elements which people use to make sense of themselves” (p.57). People can employ these conflicting demands in an attempt to find an appropriate position within a given context. Therefore, depending on the demands of a context, individuals seek to position themselves to fit *into* a situation through the negotiation of different discursive positions (*ibid*). In the case of many of the participants in this research, they acknowledged the underrepresentation of women in the workplace but tried to legitimise this by describing how these were the individual choices of women in the workplace, for instance, their failure to make full use of organisational benefits, such as maternity leave, or

not ‘planning’ or structuring their time effectively enough to maintain fully the commitments of work and home life. Somewhat crudely, these discursive structures can take the shape of, for instance, ‘There aren’t many women at senior level positions *but...*’ Such examples are sometimes termed ‘disclaimers’ by discourse analysts and are used rhetorically, as a way to shrug off criticism or foreclose particular ‘realities’ in specific contexts, such as the continued underrepresentation of women in managerial and executive level positions (Speer, 2005; Wetherell and Potter, 1988). Thus, these devices reflect something of a discursive ‘balancing act’ as individuals position themselves within much broader circulations of discourses within a particular context or locale. The study of male disc jockeys by Gill (1993) reflects this point well. It highlights how male disc jockeys substantiate the underrepresentation of women in the profession as the result of a lack of women applying for roles, and yet their unsuitability for such roles by the broadcasters (Gill, 1993). Other devices may include detailed narratives as warrants, use of scientific terms to sound more credible and objective, and the deployment of extreme case foundations (Wetherell and Potter, 1988).

Variability is therefore an important part of the study of function (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). As speakers give various, shifting and inconsistent pictures of their worlds, variability can therefore be an important tool in understanding what function is being performed through different stretches of discourse. However, variability may not be a deliberate or intentional activity as people may not be aware of their actions or speech (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). For example, there may include functions such as explaining, excusing or blaming. Therefore, discourse analysts are required to develop assumptions regarding the purpose and implications of discourse. However, in other cases, the function of the speech act is easy to understand, for example, proclaiming the gender of a newly born baby boy, but other functions such as excuses and accusations maybe more difficult to link to intentions. The ways in which individuals orient consciously or not to particular functions helps to indicate how discourse is constructed with purpose and with practical implications. In her study of the repertoires employed by DJs, Gill (1993) highlighted how they would assert that the

lack of women at the station was due to the fact that no women applied for positions, whilst they next would claim that audiences held objections, or that the voices of women were less suitable for radio.

Discourse analysts can study ideological dilemmas and variation in narratives to identify how *categories* are negotiated, purposefully mobilised and accounted for between groups of people (Gill, 1993; Wetherell, 2003b). Categories are important discursive devices which individuals and groups leverage to constitute a social order. They are used to shape the truth about self and others. The differences between categories can often be subtle, contested and dynamic; thus, categories are not stable but constantly reconstituted through interaction between individuals and within groups. The category of 'gender', for example, structures how one perceives and treats others based on their perceived gender type, and how they, in turn, respond and interact with others during interactions (Stapleton and Wilson, 2004; Wetherell, 2000).

Interpretative repertoires can be used in ways that open up or close down different categories and, therefore, *subject positions*. Subject positions can be conceptualised by the different categories that an individual occupies. During the course of an interpretative repertoire, subjects will orient to or resist different categories depending on what they perceive as pertinent, and with the objective of remaining recognisable to others. However, these orientations are not static but dynamic, and as such, subjects constantly negotiate different categories during an interpretative repertoire or stretch of talk. This dynamism reflects the fluidity of subjectivities. As Taylor (2005) states, "a position, or subject position, can be understood as a temporary identity which is conferred on or taken up by a speaker and which becomes both who she or he is seen to be, by others, and the perspective from which she or he sees the world" (p. 96). The process of taking up social categories simultaneously includes the exclusion of other potential categories, and the meaning(s) attached to those categories (Kelan, 2009). The different

categories that people take up and express in conversations represent certain obligations to say certain kinds of things in conversation, and constitute acceptable positions and the sets of rights to criticize and negotiate, thus, representing the illocutionary or social force of what one can say during interactions (Harre and Gillett, 1994).

Bringing together discourse analysis and Butlerian scholarship

Both discourse analysis and the theory of gender performativity by Butler draw on ideas of performative utterances that *do* things through Austin's speech act. Social psychologists have historically viewed social phenomena, such as attitudes and beliefs, as static, mysterious, internal states, which could only be deduced through outward behaviour (Billig, 2005; Wetherell, 2007). In contrast, discourse analysts stress the importance of language in the constitution of social meaning. In other words, people actually '*do* things with language' (p.6). Discourse analysts also include gender within this, not as something we are, nor a set of traits we have, but an effect we produce through language (McIlvenny, 2002b: p.5). Butler similarly argues that gender is something we *do* rather than *are*. There is, as Butler so infamously put it, no 'doer' behind the 'deed' or no 'I' outside of language, but the 'doer' instead comes to life through the act itself. Butler adds to this and explains that subjects accomplish gender through the recuperation of historical discursive acts. However, subjects are never able to reproduce the requirements of each act in exactly the same way, which results in variances in gender enactment. Despite this, Butler explains that the iterative nature of acts means that they 'congeal' and give the sense that gender is seamless, constant and internal. The case of 'girling' by Butler illustrates this point, as the interpellation of a baby as a girl initiates a process whereby 'girl' governs the enactment of femininity, securing a liveable life, as part of a on going gendered process. Discourse analysts also recognise how what we 'are' and know is sedimented through time and culture, as an affinity of

traces of discourses that constitute what we understand of ourselves and an issue (Wetherell and Potter, 1992)

There are parallels to draw between what discourse analysts and Butler term 'categories' or 'social categories'. Discourse analysts understand categories as what individuals perceive of others, how others perceive them, and how these perceptions shape interactions (Stapleton and Wilson, 2004; Wetherell, 2000). Individuals are said to orient *to* or *from* certain categories depending on whether they are understood to be important during an interaction (McIlvenny, 2002b). Butler argues that within the heterosexual matrix, categories reflect the requirements of power. Individuals are interpellated to take up these categories as a way of gaining recognisability. Discourse analysts also argue that categories represent different, temporary identity positions, which can be conferred onto others during the course of an interaction (Taylor, 2005: 96). Butler also argues that, whilst conferring recognisability, categories also delimit what is not knowable within the requirements of a category. Individuals that remain unrecognisable, what Butler defines as 'precarious lives', are those that are more likely to experience violence, displacement and harassment. Discourse analysts argue that categories are not static but are constantly contested, actively drawn, re-drawn and re-inscribed during interactions (Potter and Wetherell, 2005; Speer and Potter, 2001; Wetherell, 2005b). Thus, what is deemed unrecognisable or 'abject', as Butler often terms it, by way of its exclusion from the requirements of a category, is a dynamic-discursive process (Meijer and Prins, 1998).

Discourse analysis and Butlerian scholarship present anti-foundational theories concerning the relationship between discourse and subjectivity. Both reject the idea of making truth-claims. Discourse analysis is relativist in that it presents 'truth' as an explicitly discursive accomplishment. Butler similarly argues that discourse constitutes what it refers to; there is no person 'hiding' inside the subject but subjectivities are created by language and

used to account and describe things such as beliefs, opinions and emotions. Both discourse analysts and Butler would argue that this is a distinctly relational process, one in which interaction mediates socio-cultural knowledge, and provides a discursive platform to negotiate and contest different subject positions. Thus, discourse analysts do not regard subjects as “active users” of discourse (Wetherell, 1998: p.401) but understand discourses as “generating, enabling and constraining” (Potter and Wetherell, 1990: p.214). In this sense, the subject reflexively employs and reworks pre-existing discourses, which highlights how discourses are malleable and not deterministic. This resonates with the argument by Butler that the subject is already a ‘subject’ before it is interpellated into the heterosexual matrix, and the iterative nature of discursive acts means that acts are always open to repetition in new and subversive ways. Discourse analysts can employ a number of techniques to identify and examine the shifting, unstable and dynamic ‘nature’ of subjectivities, including interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas (McIlvenny, 2002b).

Butler has, however, been criticised by some discourse analysts for returning to an essentialist conception of the subject through her exploration of the ‘psyche’ and psychic excess (*cf.* Speer and Potter, 2002; Speer, 2005). They argue that Butler’s notions of resistance as ‘psychic’ reduces agency to a cognitive theory of discourse, in which such acts ultimately emerge from some internal site within the subject. This represents the subject as autonomous and unitary, which runs contra to the anti-essentialist foundations for which Butler is famed. Discourse analysts are, in contrast, concerned with advocating psychology as something that ought to be studied as an outward activity through discourse rather than as internal, psychic processes (Cameron and Kulick, 2003). However, some of the criticisms levied against Butler appear to neglect some important dimensions of her work. Firstly, Butler does leave ‘room’ for agency through the miss-citation of discursive acts. Secondly, Butler explains that discourses, which seek to prohibit certain identity positions, can also paradoxically maintain that which they seek to foreclose. This implies that alternative identity positions can be available within the structures of renunciation. As Butler (1997) aptly puts it,

‘crafting a sexual position always involves becoming haunted by what’s excluded. The more rigid the position the greater the ghost, and the more threatening it is in some way’ (p.237). Thus, commanding and conforming norms and social categories remain unfixed and open to re-signification over time.

Thirdly, the notion of the psyche according to Butler is a ‘tropological topography’, and is, thus, a socially and discursively constituted one. Butler (1997; 1997b) defines the psyche as the conscious and unconscious, which resists the discursive demand to become a coherent subject. The psyche, therefore, acts as a destabilising force of agency and resistance. However, this is not a separate ontological realm but a fundamentally relational one, contingent on the outside world. Butler has made clear that the psyche is furnished through the introjection of socially prohibited attachments or desires. This loss forms the ego, which is a bodily ego, and is preserved on the body as a reminder of the lost object. The psychic and cultural are, somewhat crudely, interlocked and mediated through melancholic ‘processes’. Discourse analysts do not refute the idea of a psyche but suggest, similar to Butler, that it is porous to the social ‘realm’ (*cf.* Wetherell, 2005b). Indeed, many discourse analysts treat psychic processes as discursive ones. Thus, some discourse analysts argue that psychic processes, such as repression, can be read and identified through shared discursive patterns during interactions. Therefore, there appears to be a role for the discourse analysts to identify and examine inconsistencies, contradictions, silences, and ideologies across interpretative repertoires, as clues for psychic dynamics including silences and disavowed intentions, as well as the role of power in shaping and contouring such psychic process (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards, 2003: 33; Antaki, 2003; Billig, 1997).

Psychoanalysis and discourse analysis

Tensions between psychoanalysis and discourse analysis

In the last section, I traced at a high level the different branches of discourse analysis as a way to position and outline the strand of discourse analysis upon which this research draws. Although discourse analysis has been very influential across the social sciences and humanities, it has come under increased scrutiny from psychoanalysts, who argue that discourse analysts have under-theorised and disregarded the importance of psychodynamics in the formation of subjectivities. This has given rise to, at times, tense debates between psychoanalysts and discourse theorist (Billig, 2002; Frosh, 2002; Hollway and Jefferson, 2005a; Wetherell, 2005b). In response, discourse analysts have criticised psychoanalysts for their top-down, suppositional interpretative approaches, which they argue reduce our understanding of affect and subjectivity to separate, internal states and, thus, completely out of reach of empirical investigation. This section explores some of the key tensions between psychoanalysts and discourse theorists regarding the production of subjectivities.

Psychoanalysts have criticised discourse analysts for privileging language and talk over cognitive processes. Whereas discourse analysts argue that realities are mediated by language, psychoanalysts posit that internal, psychic processes assimilate individual experiences, which represent a sort of dream-like state or ‘phantasy’ (Wetherell, 2003a). Phantasies are structured around relations between objects or what psychoanalysts term ‘imagos’, which mediate psychic and social reality. Relational scenes that occur in the external ‘world’ are staged internally, worked over, modified, dropped, returned, and operated around imagos (*ibid*). Psychoanalysts argue that analysing phantasies enable them to understand how internal worlds and unconscious imaginings are structured. They may, for instance, seek to

identify individual representations as expressed through rhetorical devices, metaphors and imagery, and how these are indicative of much deeper psychoanalytical processes and rationales. Whereas discourse analysts generally argue that individuals employ cultural resources differently in interactions, psychoanalysts attempt to examine the continuity of individual discourses across different contexts, particularly the modes of function laid down in early life. However, discourse analysts are uneasy with the idea that experiences and psychic processes developed in infancy continue to shape deterministically the way in which subjects represent and experience life.

Discourse analysts, however, take something of an agnostic view on the existence of the psyche. Whereas psychoanalysts are concerned with ‘diagnosing’ psychic structures and identifying how interactions are ghosted by unconscious processes, discourse analysts understand talk as mediated by the availability of different discursive categories, meanings and subject positions that individuals can assume in talk (Wetherell, 2003; Wetherell, 2003a). Discourse analysts argue that it is the role of the neuroscientist and not of researchers concerned with the construction of subjectivities in relation to the cultural environment, to attempt to study cognitive mechanisms and structures. If there is a psyche, they explain that the boundaries between internal and external ‘realms’ are probably much more inseparable and porous than purported by psychoanalysts. This has led some discourse analysts to argue that psychic processes are, in fact, constituted ‘outside-in’ through social and discursive activities (*cf.* Billig, 1997). The ‘psyche’ is, according to this view, continuously forged through discourse over time, its relations with others, and the variability of cultural resources. Psychoanalysts, along with discourse analysts, should instead be concerned with how discourses and processes of meaning making are carried inwards to form internal modes of representation rather than presupposing separate, internal processes.

Both psychoanalysts and discourse analysts offer constructivist perspectives on reality. However, discourse analysts argue that, for psychoanalysis, this is only a partial constructivist perspective, as they appear to delimit the extent of this construction to an internal realm. They argue that this renders the empirical investigation of subjectivities to mysterious, inaccessible, internal states, which are methodologically impossible to investigate (Billig, 2006). As Margaret Wetherell (2005) remarked, '[I'm] never too sure how psychoanalysts define the unconscious' but 'perhaps this is done intentionally'. Discourse analysts also argue that the concern with internal dynamics detracts from the crucial ways in which subjectivities are shaped relationally across different contexts. Psychoanalysts appear, therefore, to combine constructivist perspectives with realist or critical realist epistemologies to argue that it may be possible to identify a 'concrete' reality, after psychic processes have mediated it.

Another key area of dispute regards the importance of what psychoanalysts term 'emotional investments' in the continued formation of subjectivities. Psychoanalysts have accused discourse analysts for 'discourse determinism' and failing to consider 'why' subjects become personally invested in, and continue to take up certain identity positions over time (Frosh et al, 2000). Psychoanalysts argue that the subject is unconsciously and consciously committed to and motivated by the assumption of certain discursive positions, as they have an 'affective return' for the individual (Wendy Hollway, 2011; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000c). This implies that subjects come to take up an identity position as it has some form of reward or satisfaction for the subject. Psychoanalysts explain that this would require discourse analysts to move beyond or 'beneath' discourse to explore how subjects are 'moved' or affected by language, and how their identity positions are enhanced or secured through the take up of particular discursive positions (Frosh et al., 2003; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000b; Parker, 1997). Psychoanalysts explain, however, that this is not a seamless assumption, but one that can result in conscious and unconscious conflicts, and contradictions between the emotional investments held by the subject and those demanded within a specific context (Wendy Hollway, 2011;

Hollway and Jefferson, 2000c, 2005a, 2005b).

Another point of tension regards the approaches used to collect data. Psychoanalysts have criticised discourse analysts for deriving research outcomes from small, fragmented extracts on the basis of certain codes or themes used to analyse the narratives of participants, which they argue lack detail and richness (Hollway, 2011). Psychoanalysts contrast this with their approach of building up detailed cases of individual analysands, which they argue allows for an understanding of the whole person. Psychoanalysts advocate the use of ‘free association’ which elicits detailed narratives through the use of fewer, open-ended questions, and avoiding interruptive ‘why’ questions, which can encourage the intellectualization of responses (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000a, 2009). Psychoanalysts argue that free association, and the free flow of ideas and emotions, allows unconscious dynamics to come to the foreground, such as anxiety and defensive dynamics (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000b). However, discourse analysts remain deeply uncomfortable with such ‘top-down’, quasi-clinical techniques. Parker (2005), for instance, dedicates an information box in his book warning ‘beware the free-association narrative interview’. He argues the method risks: firstly, *individualizing* societal forces as an aggregate of individual psychological processes; secondly, *pathologising* the subject through the identification of historical activities which determine current actions; thirdly, *essentialising* when the analyst diagnoses unconscious processes, information unknown to the subject, and interweaving this with clinical terms and theories which render the analysis undisputable (*cf.* Midgley, 2006); and finally, *disempowering* as the analyst is represented as more knowable of the subject than the subject themselves, which undermines the voice of the analysand (*cf.* Frosh and Baraitser, 2008).

Many of these and other tensions came to a head in a set of heated exchanges between Hollway and Jefferson (2005a, 2005b), Spears (2005) and Wetherell (2005b). Hollway and Jefferson (2005) researched a working class

man called Vince and the unresolved, internal conflicts between his experiences of a job that he greatly disliked, including exploitation and exhaustion, and the pressure of maintaining a respectable job as a man, and providing for his family. They explain that Vince wanted to leave his job and, therefore, became ill as a way to resolve the conflict between his fear of losing his job and not fulfilling his duty as head of the household. However, Spears (2005) criticised the study for analyzing only a single case and recommended sampling more cases of other men in similar challenges. Both Spears (2005) and Wetherell (2005b) raised ethical concerns regarding the pathologisation of Vince in the study. Spears argued that the study presents the psyche as both the 'source' and 'destination' of meaning, which promotes a deterministic perspective on subjectivity. Wetherell (2005b) similarly argued that Vince is individualized and diagnosed by the researchers in ways that he may not recognise, as a "timid man choosing illness to avoid confrontation with a bullying boss" (p.169). Wetherell explained that Vince is clear about how his experiences of work resulted in his illness, and refutes the idea that his illness was the result of unresolved unconscious processes. This perspective runs the risk of diagnosing Vince as the reason for his own challenges, rather than the consequence of external pressures. Wetherell (2005b) argues that Vince is not caught up in some internal conflict but is instead under pressure to narrate a story, which is acceptable to different, important groups and individuals in his life. It could be argued, therefore, that psychoanalysts encourage or put pressure on individuals to give "coherent" narratives, which they then attempt to link back to early childhood experiences.

Psychic investments: a reapproachment of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis

Despite the often heated exchanges between discourse analysts and psychoanalysts, as Edley (2006) put it, 'never shall the twain meet', there is in fact much congruence between the two approaches (Hollway, 2011;

Midgley, 2006). Both discourse analysis and psychoanalysis conceptualise the subject as fragmented and dynamic, and share a common concern with how identities are constructed through discourse, by the individual subject and in relation to others. Thus, the imbrication of psychoanalysis, or at least parts of it, with discourse analysis is not out of the question. This section makes the case for the use of psychoanalysis to inform discourse analysis in order to enrich how scholars collect, examine and understand talk and interaction. This follows the acknowledgement by some high profile scholars, such as Margaret Wetherell (2003; 2007), that discourse analysis has become “hegemonic in certain areas” and, in particular, for neglecting to consider the reasons *why* subjects come to take up certain discursive positions over time. Margaret Wetherell has suggested that discourse analysts could start to rethink some of the theories on positioning presented by psychosocial researchers especially the ‘depressive’ and ‘paranoid-schizoid position’, and the associated psychodynamics of ‘splitting’, ‘introjection’ and ‘projection’. This section responds directly to this call by exploring how discourse analysts can start to rethink why subjects come to take up certain discursive positions through drawing on the work of ‘emotional investments’, particularly ideas of the ‘depressive’ and ‘paranoid-schizoid’ positions, by Wendy Hollway. However, this does not result in a complete abandonment of the central tenets of discourse analysis, but through the examination of interpretative repertoires, individual biographies and the composition of these narratives, discourse analysts can contribute to psychoanalytically informed discussions on positioning through, what I term, ‘psychic investments’.

There has been very little attempt to deploy psychoanalytical theories beyond the clinical setting in wider academic research (*cf.* Hollway, 1989; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Ussher, 1994; Walkerdine, 1987). Branney (2008), however, identifies three sub-branches of research that have attempted to bring together different parts of both psychoanalysis and discursive approaches: Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology, Lacanian excursions into social psychology, and Psychosocial research. All three approaches broadly attempt to connect the construction of individual

subjectivities with their social contexts. However, there remains considerable confusion regarding what term should be used to encapsulate all three approaches. Wetherell and Edley (1999), for instance, refer to work that brings discourse analysis and psychoanalysis together as ‘psycho-discursive’. Psycho-discursive approaches use discourse analytical related work to theorise subjectivity but explain that this theorization is not limited only to psychoanalysis. Hollway (2004) prefixes the ‘social’ with ‘psycho’, in ‘psychosocial’ studies, but this approach is not limited to either discourse analysis or psychoanalysis. Critical Transformative Psychoanalytic Discourse Analysis by Parker (1997, 2015) could be considered appropriate as it encapsulate a plethora of approaches, but it is a complex and often contradictory field of practices. This research aligns more with the ‘psycho-discursive’ term as espoused by Wetherell and Edley (1999) as it combines the psychological concepts underpinning discourse analysis, as outlined earlier in this chapter, with theories from psychosocial studies. The term is fitting in this sense as it is flexible and allows for combinations of theories on subjectivity, which avoids a force fitting of empirical data into hegemonic, grand theories (Branney, 2008). Although it is well beyond the scope of this thesis to explore all psycho-discursive work, this section will, firstly, outline the three psycho-discursive approaches identified by Branney (2008), paying particular attention to the psychosocial approach, and the questions and implications at a high level this has for discourse analysts.

The first approach, (PDP) ‘Psychoanalytic discursive psychology’, emerges principally from the work of Michael Billig, and treats discourse as its main focus. The approach draws primarily on psychoanalytical cases of Freud but the approach could also be used with interview data. The approach emerges mainly from the discursive work of Edwards and Potter (1992) and can be viewed as ‘bottom-up’, in which analysts are focused on the intricacies of turns and talk in interactions. Billig (1987, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2006) proposes the idea of the “dialogic unconscious in action”, which refers to how repression is achieved through dialogue and interaction, particularly where talk includes contradictions, disputes, dilemmas and arguments. Billig explains that individuals learn what is appropriate and inappropriate in

different contexts. What is prohibited becomes an object of desire and subjects work to displace these temptations discursively. However, discursive repressions do not vanish but can reemerge in other ways, for instance, through humour, which Billig argues works to break the constraints of tolerance and prohibition. The discourse analyst must, therefore, examine talk to identify practices during interactions that seek to close down certain utterances, meanings and intentions. Billig explains that these reflect the dynamics of power and are not reducible, therefore, to the individual but are part of group relations. Thus, affects such as hate and intolerance do not ‘emerge’ *from* the individual, but Billig suggests that discourses contain affects which one ‘feels’ when they deploy discourses and ideologies with others during an interaction.

The second approach, ‘Lacanian excursions’, emerged from the book *‘Psychoanalytic Cultures: Psychoanalytic Discourse in Western Society’* by Ian Parker (1997b). This treats psychoanalysis as a discourse and suggests that it can be used to illuminate cultural phenomena, as it already organizes the issues it seeks to address. Parker is concerned with how psychoanalytical ideas and concepts have become ubiquitous in everyday talk. For instance, concepts such as ‘projection’ or ‘paranoid’ have permeated popular culture. The widespread influence of psychoanalytical terms into society is what Parker terms the ‘discursive complex’. On the one hand, psychoanalytical discourse addresses or is employed by subjects as way of comprehend their lives and relations with others. On the other, these discourses also highlight existing shapes of subjectivity. Thus, subjects are commanded to employ these discourses and the discourses simultaneously reconfigure and mobilise subjects. Parker draws heavily on Lacan psychoanalysis to consider how to collect and examine data (Branney, 2006; Georgaca, 2001; Hollway, 1989; Walkerdine, 1987).

The third approach is the psychosocial approach. Psychosocial scholars or ‘cultural psychoanalysts’, as Wetherell (1999, 2001) has sometimes termed

them, study subjectivities within socio-cultural, discursive and psychological contexts (Gough, 2009; Hollway, 2006a). They aim not to reduce either the 'individual' to the 'social' or the 'social' to the 'individual' (Hollway, 2008a, 2008b). The growth of interest in psychosocial studies in the UK follows a general move away from more traditional psychoanalytical scholarship, such as Freud and other approaches in the Frankfurt School, towards structuralist and post-structuralist oriented works, such as Lacan, Foucault and Klein (Walkerdine, 2008). The study of discourse is important in understanding subject formation. Although psychosocial studies can often draw heavily on psychoanalytical methods and theories, psychosocial studies does not have to include, by definition, psychoanalysis (Hollway, 2008b). An important area of interest for psychosocial scholars, such as Wendy Hollway, is the study of *emotional investments*. These are concerned with why subjects come to take up certain discursive positions in talk over time and across different contexts, and reflect the attempt by the subject to protect itself from vulnerabilities. Psychosocial scholars argue to investigate emotional investments, researchers must move *behind* discourse to examine anxieties and defensive forms (Wetherell, 2003a). Psychosocial scholars share the psychoanalytical assumption that anxiety is a fundamental condition of human existence (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997).

Central to the investigation of emotional investments are the study of biographical accounts, termed 'psych-biographies'. Psych-biographies are important as psychosocial scholars explain that past events become signified and invested in through phantasies, both at the time of the event and subsequently, shaping the experiences, actions and relations of subjects over time (Frosh, 2010; Holloway, 1984; Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Psychosocial scholars recognise two emotional investments. First is the 'paranoid-schizoid' position which refers to the psychic state when objects and experiences undergo splitting in polarized ways, as either 'good' or 'bad', idealized or destructive (Hollway, 2006b). Objects and experiences perceived as 'good' are introjected and form the psychic reality of the subject, whilst those that are feared, painful or discomforting are projected outwards and expelled from the self. Splitting is an important psychic

dynamic which enables the subject to protect and defend itself from perceived internal and external threats, which induce anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997). Thus, the subject takes up this position when it seeks to control the sources of its own satisfaction (Hollway, 1997). Second, the move from splitting good and bad apart precedes the transition to an ambivalent position, in which good and bad can exist together in the same object, which is termed the 'depressive position'. The achievement of ambivalence comes when the subject perceives constancy in the object and is, therefore, able to link experiences of the object to specific moments or times (Hollway, 1997). Although there is a chronological movement from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position, Hollway (2006b) explains that the movement can oscillate between a predominance of one or the other throughout life (*see also* Ogden, 1994).

The achievement of ambivalence in the depressive position opens up a new ethical concern for the other, what Wendy Hollway (2006b) terms 'the capacity to care'. The subject recognizes that both love and hate can co-exist in the same object, which results in the diminishment of idealization and denigration associated with the paranoid-schizoid position. As hatred has been felt towards the object in the paranoid-schizoid position, the subject consequently experiences guilt, gratitude and mourning for the damage that has been inflicted on the object. There is, therefore, a turn towards reparation and responsibility for the other. This results in a significant shift in the quality of anxiety experienced by the subject under the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. With the former, anxiety is felt only for the self whilst, in the latter, there is a projection outward of anxiety and a concern for the other. Thus, the take up of the depressive position involves the concern for others, whilst the paranoid-schizoid position is concerned with the self, and defined by an 'absent-presence' of the other (Gough, 2009).

Although discourse analysts have largely ignored ideas around emotional investments, Margaret Wetherell (Edley and Wetherell, 1999; Wetherell,

2003a) has made a number of attempts to engage discursively with aspects of these ideas. Perhaps one of her most serious and sympathetic engagements with psychoanalytical ideas from a discursive position were in the analysis of the ‘interests’ of a reality television programme contestant called Jade. Wetherell (2007) identified a number of invested positions that Jade took up when in interaction with others. In the ‘down subject position’, Wetherell explains that Jade occupied a narcissistically invested position as a way of gaining attention from others through demonstrating her ignorance and lack of knowledge on simple topics, such as basic geography, in conversations. However, Wetherell argues that this position also had a ‘sado-masochistic’ edge, as investing in the down subject position actually *elevated* the position of Jade to an ‘up-position’. Wetherell explains that Jade relinquished her power when interacting with the man she desired, which enabled the man to judge, ‘teach’ and assess her seemingly low aptitude. The only power Jade was able to obtain from the interaction, in the ‘up’ position, was through the potential interest and affection of the man she was talking to. Thus, Wetherell was arguing that Jade appeared to expose herself to ridicule for her incompetence but at the same time, gained pleasure in the attention she gained from it, as the ‘baby’ of the show. Therefore, looking across stretches of interaction, Wetherell suggests that Jade takes up a number of up/down subject investments, accomplished in situ, new to each context, but echoing past practices and unconscious roles.

The study of female classical musicians as entrepreneurial subjects by Scharff (2015) also appears to explore psycho-discursive dynamics in talk and interaction. Although competition *with* or *against* others is often seen as an important part of entrepreneurial subjectivity, Scharff explains that female classical musicians redirected competition *towards* themselves through their discursive focus on ‘individuality’ or taking different career routes and options to others. Thus, under neoliberalism, competition can also be “turned inwards” (p.2), which Scharff suggests denotes a deeper internalization of norms and the workings of power. Scharff (2015) also discusses how women draw boundaries and blame others for the insecure nature of work in the sector. For instance, the female musicians expressed disdain for those they

considered 'lazy', and showed very little empathy for the hardships experienced by those who were less successful. Scharff argues that the lack of empathy is the 'effect' of neoliberalism, which works to exclude others. Could the attempts by some women to position others, for instance, as 'lazy' and individually accountable for their lack of success, be read as a form of *projection*?

The study of emotional investments, therefore, raises a number of new and interesting questions for discourse analysts to consider further, including: What discourses do subjects employ to describe and account for past events? How do these discourses used to account for events contemporaneously? How can the 'paranoid-schizoid' and 'depressive positions' be identified in discourse? What stories and narratives surround the take up of either position? Are there examples of oscillations between the two positions across stretches of talk? Is there a dominance of one position over another across a narrative? Can psychodynamics associated with these positions, such as projection and introjection, be identified in talk? How do interpretations of ambivalence operate in contexts outside of early infant development? How do individual psychic experiences link with those of other subjects within the same context? How are dominant discourses operating in specific contexts chime and reconfigured with the personal biographies of participants?

This research seeks to use and adopt the ideas of emotional investments by psychosocial scholars. This requires two important considerations for discourse analysts. Firstly, research must engage directly with biographical material, which prepares ground for a more psychoanalytical infused analysis and the linking of past and present subjectivities. Although there has been very little discursive work done on the historical development of subjects, there is no reason why the discourse analyst cannot engage with such material (Wetherell, 2013). This does not have to be concerned, as perhaps traditional psychoanalysts might be, with the early development of

the infant, but biographical investigations can focus on specific historical experiences of the subject in a very similar way. In the case of this research, participants described in detail past experiences and their affective impact, particularly concerning how previous work-relations had broken down and had unfairly impacted them.

Secondly, discourse analysts must focus more on the individual as a specific site where discursive meaning is organized over time. Broadly speaking, ‘top-down’ analysts focus on the implications of grand discourses on identities and ‘bottom-up’ analysts focus on the finer elements of language. However, a more ‘eclectic’ analysis would take as its focus, firstly, contemporary and historical relational experiences and, secondly, discourses of individuals and their implications. Such an approach would not only identify the shared discourses and tropes within a specific context but it would also ‘shift back’ or ‘taper in’ somewhat to consider the individual social actor within the wider context. In other words, the ‘eclectic’ analysis seeks a more nuanced examination of accounts on the past *and* present, and on the individual *and* social. Margaret Wetherell (2007) has raised similar questions regarding the production of ‘scale’ – the micro, meso and macro – and chronology by the subject, and its importance in the examination of what psychosocial scholars call emotional investments. Although there may be an attempt to employ theories, and in particular, psychoanalytical theories, scholars employing ‘eclectic’ approaches are not making an ontological claim regarding the subject or what the subject is ‘really like’. By refocusing on the individual and linking this to past, present and shared discourses, they are merely attempting to examine the cumulative construction of subjectivities over time, as an open continuity rather than fixed or static over time and space.

Bringing together the ideas of non-violent action by Butler and ambivalence by psychosocial scholars

This final section attempts to bring together emotional investments by psychosocial scholars discussed in the previous section, and ideas of relational ethics by Butler discussed earlier in the chapter. Butler attempts to situate grief and violence in the inability of individuals to mourn attachments that they have desired and lost. Those who are not recognized represent the object of one's lost desire. Grief can only emerge for lives that are perceived to have lived or have an ending. However, when unliveable lives become visible through the enactment of what is prohibited within the heterosexual matrix, the coherence of life is problematised, and these bodies can be subjected to violence, harassment and displacement. Butler explains that if a subject denies this violence or their vulnerability to violence, the subject runs the risk of relocating 'injurability' *onto* the other. This creates the sense that the subject who enacts violence is detached from violence, and attempts to pass itself off as a morale virtue. However, when the subject recognizes its aggression, it is able to craft the aggression into a mode of expression that seeks to protect rather than harm the other. Thus, when the subject takes responsibility, they are able use aggression as a way to restrict violent impulses against the other, and find non-violent solutions to rage.

There are significant parallels with this and what psychosocial scholars call 'ambivalence' as part of the depressive position. Psychosocial scholars draw on the theories and metaphors of Melanie Klein when investigating the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Klein explains that lost objects are melancholically introjected and installed into the psyche of the subject, as a way of preserving what has been lost. For Klein, this sets off an internal process of persecution in which the subject berates itself from within due to the loss of the object. The loss of the object results in hatred and aggression towards the object that has been lost. This is what is termed the 'paranoid-schizoid' position. However, after the aggression that has been demonstrated

towards the object, Klein explains that the ego feels remorse. As a result, the subject feels anxiety. This is felt, firstly, to protect and ensure the survivability for the ego from the persecutors who have initiated such destructive psychic dynamics and, secondly, anxiety is felt for others and protecting them from such violence. The subject, thus, feels guilt for the aggression and destruction that has been inflicted onto the object.

In *'Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?'* (2009), Butler traces the idea by Klein that one develops moral responses when the survivability of the ego is at issue. For Butler, Klein is suggesting that the emergence of guilt does not create a moral relation with the other, but a desire for self-preservation. For Klein, one wants the other to survive in order that one survives. If this is the correct, Butler suggests "I probably don't care very much about the other person as such; they do not come into focus for me as another, separate from me, who "deserves" to live and whose life depends on my ability to check my own destructiveness" (p. 45). Thus, according to Klein, survivability precedes the moral relation to the other. Butler agrees with Klein that subjects are concerned for the other for the purpose of 'survivability', but this is not the survivability of the individual ego as Klein suggests. Butler advances a social ontology by explaining that one's survivability depends on relations with others that *precede* and *exceed* the self. Boundaries between individuals are a function of these relations and reflect complex negotiations and compromises, and thus, 'separateness' reflects how one is bound to the other. Butler suggests that in protecting the other, subjects are not seeking to protect themselves. Instead, subjects cannot exist without the continued existence of the other. She argues that if guilt is linked to fear of survivability, this suggests that guilt echoes pre-moral fears and impulses regarding destructiveness and its implications. Guilt therefore tells us how moralization deflects from survivability itself. As Butler suggests " ...guilt seems to refer less to any humanness than to life, and, indeed, to survivability. Thus, only as an animal who can live or die do any of us feel guilt; only for one whose life is bound up with other lives and who must negotiate the power to injure, to kill, and to sustain life, does guilt become an issue" (p. 46). Thus, Butler is arguing that Klein's work should focus on

guilt as a result of those who seek to preserve the other and, therefore, themselves.

The work of psychosocial scholars raises a number of broader questions regarding the capacity to care within the contemporary neoliberal context defined by individualism and self-autonomy, including: How can subjects achieve ambivalence and care for the other within such individualistic contexts? What interpretative or discursive frames emerge to express the tensions between relational and individualizing dynamics? Do individualization processes *actually* produce autonomous individuals? Do contemporary individualizing dynamics result in the loss of the capacity of care? Or can subjectivities contoured within highly individualized environments locate new ways to express care, and balance the pressures of individualizing dynamics? For Butler, senses of autonomy for the self and individualism raise problematic questions. Butler asks, ‘am I responsible only for myself? Are there others for whom I am responsible? And how do I, in general, determine the scope of my responsibility? For Butler, when such questions are raised, the “I” is a bounded with others. And so in assuming this responsibility, one is assuming indirectly a partial “we”. The realization of precariousness through the collective ‘we’ calls into question the ontology of individualism implies.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together a number of different bodies of work, namely Butlerian ideas on gender performativity, grief, non-violent action, discourse analysis and psychoanalytical work on ‘emotional investments’. The aim of the chapter was to show how, through the imbrication of these distinct and yet interrelated bodies of work, scholars can better understand how subjectivities are configured by and resist the individualising neoliberal forces prevalent in organisations. The first sections of the chapter detailed

the theory of gender performativity by Butler and how this underpins her later, broader concerns with precarious lives, grief and relational ethics. However, Butler's work has been subject to much criticism for neglecting the intricacies and vibrancies of how identities are accomplished in day-to-day interactions and talk. I have, therefore, attempted to bring together discourse analysis with the work of Butler as a way to provide the practical tools required to investigate empirically the ideas presented by Butler. However, discourse analysts have, in turn, been criticised by psychoanalysts for discourse determinism and, in particular, failing to consider important aspects of subject development, such as *why* individuals come to take up certain identity positions in discourse over time. This has often given rise to heated exchanges between leading psychoanalytical and discourse theorists. Despite this, I have attempted to show the congruencies between the two practices. In particular, I have tried to show how by drawing on psychoanalytical concepts, such as emotional investments, discourse analysts can enrich their understanding of the construction of subjectivities over time. Moreover, psychoanalytical work on emotional investments provides an important framework for interpreting how subjects achieve the capacity to care, which chimes with Butlerian thinking on non-violent action and relational ethics, and which directly contradicts neoliberal 'individualising' forces in contemporary organisations.

Chapter Four

Towards a Psychoanalytically Informed Qualitative Research Enquiry

Chapter Two argued that existing scholarship tends to present subjects as static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism, and pointed to a lacuna of research exploring the psycho-discursive oscillations of subjects in organisations, particularly the movement *towards* ethical positions. Chapter Three offered an imbrication of Butlerian ideas, emotional investments by psychoanalysts and discourse analysts as a new way to conceptualise the constitution of ethical and responsible subjectivities in organisations. My concern with psychoanalytical theories has brought me to the point of exploring how one can use and transform psychoanalysis ontology and epistemology to develop new ways of carrying out qualitative research, which are more detached from the positivist principles that continue to lurk behind aspects of feminist and social science research methods (Hollway, 2012). However, such attempts to bring psychoanalysis closer to other disciplines remains, as the title of the 2016 Institute of Psychoanalysis conference aptly put it, “the unfilled promise”.

This chapter, however, attempts to fulfil an aspect of this promise by developing an indicative qualitative research method inspired by psychoanalysis. From time spent in the field and data interpretation, I suggest that the pursuit of an alternative, psychoanalytical epistemology can enable scholars to redress some of the pertinent challenges typically evaded in qualitative research methods. For me this concerns how one can generate, firstly, richer participant responses and, secondly, a more meaningful approach to reflexivity. I suggest that psychoanalytical principles taken

from, for instance, the Freudian inspired ‘Free Association Narrative Interview Method’ by Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000b, 2008, 2009) and ‘Reverie’ by Wilfred Bion, can help scholars to move beyond the verbal or ‘what is said’, to a more complex exploration of how affect and psychodynamics structure individual and shared subject accounts. In sum, I suggest that psychoanalytically informed qualitative research methods can capture more complex material concerning intra, inter and collective psychological dynamics.

Research objective and aims

My overall aim was to explore the connections between broader neoliberal discourses and psycho-discursive oscillations in the accounts given by men and women in the finance and accounting sector. In particular, I was concerned with understanding *why* subjects took up certain positions in discourse, paying close attention to the associations made to inter-relational ties and the affective states evoked, particularly melancholia. My concern with melancholia was not from a pathological perspective but from a strictly Butlerian sense of the term, which understands it as evoked from broken attachments with others. I wanted, overall, to understand if, within highly individualistic and self-autonomous neoliberal workplaces, ethical vicissitudes emerged in which subjects *moved away* from a narcissistic concern with the self, *towards* a greater responsibility for the other in the workplace, what I term ‘the capacity to care’.

I wanted to employ a multiple and single case design to explore individual and shared, or ‘collective’, psycho-discursive dynamics by gender in the finance and accounting sector, and how these mapped to broader neoliberal discourses. I again understood gender from a Butlerian sense of the term, as a fluid, subversive and shifting chain of performative acts, rather than as something static and ‘internal’ to the individual. Gender performativity in

this sense can be examined through the contradictory aspects of interpretative repertoires and psycho-dynamics that emerge and shape inter-subjective relations. I was also interested in identifying characteristics in talk such as hesitation, humour, silences, tone, pitch and pace.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is currently a lacuna of research exploring the gendered and psychosocial experiences of organisational life in finance and accounting. In order to address this, I developed the following research questions to investigate:

1. What shared frames of understanding in the workplace do men and women draw on in talk?
2. What psychic reality do these frames furnish?
3. What psycho-discursive dynamics emerge in the accounts given by men and women?

With regards to Question 1, I wanted to explore how men and women discursively constructed shared frames of understanding the neoliberal workplace. More specifically, I was concerned with identifying how subjects symbolized work through the use of what I term “heightened imagery”, including metaphors, irony and analogies. With respect to Question 2, I was concerned with understanding the psychic reality that these frames of understanding gave rise to, and the sensuous conditions in which the subject is “sensed” and “sensing”. In Question 3, I sought to study individual subject cases for the presence of psycho-discursive dynamics, including projection, and how these linked to broader neoliberal discourses. I also aimed to explore and explain, across individual accounts, the shifts in positions from individualistic, self-autonomous and defended neoliberal discourses to other visceral positions, particularly those that represented guilt and responsibility for the other.

I was also interested in understanding states of ‘knowing-unknowingness’ at work. I wanted to identify senses of, for instance, control or lack of control, having to do one’s best in an ‘unknowing’ situation, or living with what may happen next and the ‘knowingness’ of this. There was also a need to generate biographical material. However, rather than generating material on the very early experiences of participants, for instance, during infancy, as perhaps some psychoanalysts may be concerned with, I was instead interested in ‘later’ biographical experiences at work. I was interested in understanding how these ‘later’ experiences shaped and continued to shape the subjectivities of the men and women who participated in the study. I developed this position based on *The Capacity to Care* (2006) in which Hollway offers some alternative instances of how the capacity to care could be applied beyond the mother-child dyad. This is not to suggest that these very early experiences are unimportant in shaping the psyche of the subject but to ignore subsequent experiences would be to misunderstand the dynamicism of subjectivity and its performative qualities.

Psychoanalysis in Qualitative Research

Feminist scholars have a long tradition of challenging power and demanding that the unseen and silenced are rendered ‘visible’ and ‘heard’ (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). In particular, feminist scholars have criticised the positivist paradigm and the use of quantitative methods in social science research, as it views the social world as static and accessible only to researchers if they remain detached, neutral and objective during the collection and interpretation of data (Code, 1993; Johnston, 2010; Oakley, 1981; Reinhartz, 1979). Feminist scholars, in contrast, take a diametrically opposed, constructivist position, which views the social world as multiple, constructed and dynamic (Maynard, 1995). Drawing primarily on face-to-face qualitative interviews, feminist scholars advocate reflexivity in the research process, which recognizes how the positionality of the researcher based on, for instance, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or class, can impact the

collection and interpretation of data (Letherby, 2003; Parr, 1998; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Feminist scholars, therefore, stress the importance of achieving asymmetric power relations between the researcher and participant during interviews, and in their representation of the participant (Grenz, 2005; Harding and Norberg, 2005; Wolf, 1996).

Psychoanalytically inflected researchers have, however, been critical of the way in which ‘reflexivity’ has been carried out by some feminist and social science researchers. They argue that whilst researchers ritually incant broad categories, they fail to consider the significance of these positions (Gill, 1998). Homogeneous explanations, such as, ‘I am a woman, thus, I can interview and understand women’, spring to mind. Butler (1990) explains that, “if one “is” is a woman, that is surely not all one is” as it “intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (p.3). Butler is disrupting the notion that gender is a common identity and cannot, therefore, be assumed. Johnston (2010), for instance, in her study of domestic lesbian spaces, problematizes the nature of such categories and argues that despite being acknowledged as “an insider”, as a lesbian, she had very different understandings of what it meant to be a lesbian in comparison to her participants with regards to apparel, education, background and age. The use of broad categories, moreover, neglects the fragmentary nature of subjecthood and the potential for individual agency (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000a).

However, psychoanalytically inflected researchers claim to conduct reflexivity in a more meaningful way, as they pay close attention to the *actual* establishment of relationships. A psychoanalytically informed researcher will, for instance, focus on how relationships register psychically and whether this can be used as an instrument of ‘knowing’ the other. Psychoanalysts are also critical of how feminist and other qualitative researchers typically carry out interviews in a proscriptive, ‘question-and-answer’ form, which they argue sets the tone of who is in charge, what can

or cannot be said, and overall, works to suppress the voice of the participant. This approach also assumes that the questions and words of the interviewer are understood in exactly the same way as the participant (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, 2008). Psychoanalysts are more concerned with conducting interviews that provide maximum scope for participants to raise pertinent issues and challenges, which they argue enables scholars to identify contradictions and defensive positions in talk, and how these are affectively bound together (Walkerdine, 2007).

Psychosocial scholars argue that the use of psychoanalysis can have radical ontological, epistemological and methodological implications on research (W Hollway, 2008). Ontologically, for instance, Kleinian ideas show how relations emerge through the identification with external objects, and the process of ‘introjecting’ parts of these objects to form the ‘self’, or conversely, the depletion of the self through ‘projection’ or the externalization of undesired aspects into the external world (Strømme et al., 2010). These ideas may help researchers understand, for instance, how subjects identify with affective states or ‘apply’ meaning to experiences or situations, and the simultaneous embodiment of these. Similarly, the theory of the ‘container-contained’ relationship by Bion (1962) provides a fascinating insight into how one responds and manages relations with others. The theory refers to the capacity of the mother to detoxify projected anxieties and desires from her child and her ability, in turn, to project these back to the child in a more bearable form. The theory also provides a radical epistemology for the researcher, as it suggests that subjectivity can be used as a way of knowing and ‘tapping into’ the affective states constructed during inter-subjective encounters (*see* ‘Reflexivity’ section later in the chapter).

Despite the radical opportunities that psychoanalysis offers, there has been growing concern regarding a possible “crisis” in the field and the future viability of it as an intellectual and therapeutic movement. Much of this

centres on the argument that psychoanalysis has isolated itself from other fields (Garza-Guerrero, 2002; Hauser, 2002; Schwartz, 2003). As psychoanalysis developed within the clinical setting, therapeutic concerns have overshadowed it and restricted the absorption of new approaches and, in turn, the development of ‘extra-clinical’ methods (Cartwright, 2004; Hauser, 2002). Conversely, however, some scholars have become increasingly dissatisfied with existing qualitative research methods, which they claim are distant and impersonal (Holmes, 2012). Although earlier strands of psychoanalysis were positioned as ‘objective’ science, over a century of developments have meant that psychoanalysis now finds itself somewhere at the end of the constructivist spectrum. Qualitative researchers are, therefore, increasingly drawing on constructivist psychoanalytical principles to inform their research strategies (Midgley, 2006). Examples of this include the free-association narrative interview (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), researcher countertransference (Gemignani, 2011; Stein, 2001), and psychoanalytically inflected ‘reflexivity’ (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). However, despite the progress, there remains significant scope for greater collaboration between psychoanalysis and other disciplines (Leuzinger-Bohleber and Fischmann, 2006), particularly in business and organisational studies (Fotaki et al., 2012; Kenny, 2012) where there is currently a lacuna of research on embodiment.

Advocacy for greater collaboration should not, however, ignore the potentially adverse implications of drawing on psychoanalytical methods in qualitative research enquiries. Broadly speaking, these can include the tendency of psychoanalysis to individualise and pathologise subjects, overgeneralize findings and position researchers as top-down ‘experts’ (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008; Kvale, 2003) (*see* Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion). However, I am not arguing for a complete reduction of qualitative research methods into psychoanalysis. I have, instead, sought to apply psychoanalytical principles pragmatically to data collection and interpretation, as a way to understand more profoundly the complex ideas detailed in Chapter Three regarding psychic reality and investments in discourse. Thus, this “psychoanalytical sensibility” differs markedly from

how psychoanalysis is practiced in the clinical setting (Baraitser, 2008: 426) where the focus is on diagnosing and treating individuals. In the following sections of the chapter, I outline how they developed an alternative psychoanalytically informed qualitative research method to data collection, interpretation and reflexivity. This approach builds on and transforms existing psychoanalytically inflected methodologically work by scholars such as Hollway and Jefferson (2000a, 2000b, 2008, 2009) and Walkerdine et al. (2001).

Data Collection

In order to avoid some of the criticisms raised by psychoanalysts concerning the proscriptive form of qualitative research interviews, I adopted some of the principles of the Free Association Interview ('FANI') or 'participant led' interview, as espoused by Hollway and Jefferson (2000, 2008). Psychosocial scholars typically employ the method, firstly, as a way to identify shifts in the subject matter raised by participants and, secondly, to understand the importance of inter-subjective relations with others. The FANI method was designed based on the ideas of Freud and seeks to identify unconscious pathways structuring discourse, rather than just analyzing associations between individual words or word-clusters, which psychoanalysts claim reflect emotional and not intentional motivations (Strømme et al., 2010). I appropriated the following principles to mirror some of the dimensions used by Strømme et al. (2010) to structure interviews in a way that can also give rise to projective processes in talk.

Firstly, I developed interview questions that were as open ended as possible. This was done to give the participant as much flexibility as possible to raise pertinent stories, events or issues regarding their experiences at work. I felt that if questions were too specific then this would undoubtedly impose on the responses of the participants, potentially generating 'narrow' and

affectively ‘shallow’ or ‘thin’ answers. The broad questions would, therefore, provide ample opportunity for contradictions, which are an important aspect of interpretative repertoires (*see* Chapter Three for a detailed discussion), and psycho-dynamics, such as projections, to emerge during a dialogue. I found that the first question posed in the interview - “Can you tell me a little bit about your career to date?” - was particularly important in this form of interviewing. The question was effective for two reasons: first, it allowed the participant to talk about the events they considered most important during the course of their careers; and secondly, it enabled me to begin generating biographical data immediately and identify key associations, for instance, regarding inter-subjective relations with others over time.

Secondly, I decided to avoid ‘why’ questions and try to focus, instead, on the ‘how’. Psychoanalytically informed researchers argue that ‘why’ questions prompt ‘over-intellectualised’ responses. This is not to say that this data cannot be useful, as it may provide insight into how subjects discursively rationalize and defend aspects of the workplace. However, in general, I was more concerned with eliciting stories, inter-relational ties and affective meaning than understanding, for instance, ‘why participants thought networking was important to their career progression’. In order to generate affectively rich data, I used probing questions prefixed with, for instance: ‘How did you feel when [that happened]?’ ‘What did you do in that [situation]?’ ‘Can you give me an example of a time when you felt [like that]?’ I found that such probing question forms elicited more concrete and detailed stories on the experiences of participants. More specifically, such questions regarding ‘feelings’ opened up dialogues on the affective lives of the participants; this might have otherwise been difficult as such issues are typically perceived as ‘inappropriate’ or ‘unprofessional’ in the highly corporate environments in which the interviews were conducted.

Thirdly, I also resisted the temptation to intervene or disrupt the participant

whilst they were giving an account of themselves. This meant giving the participant as much time as possible to come to the end of their account and allowing for gaps or silences to take shape in talk, rather than, for instance, trying to fill in awkward silences. I would also note down any pertinent points on a notebook during the course of the interview to come back to and discuss with the participant. This also enabled me to capture the words, phrases and imagery employed by participants, which could then be used to form further probing questions. Fourthly, I also withheld from interpreting the accounts as the participants gave them. This was crucial so not to close off new stories, events or ideas, which may later on, during the data interpretation stage, provide further insight into the psychic reality of subjects. Interpretation during the interview stages also raises ethical dilemmas for the researcher, which I explore in the Reflexivity section of this chapter.

The aforementioned principles also resonate with aspects of the 'Biographic-Narrative Interpretative Method' (or 'BNIM') (Kreher, 2002; Rosenthal, 1993, 2002a, 2002b, 2006), who use it to elicit stories from participants. Although I did not *literally* employ this method, my concern with eliciting stories from participants drew me to some of the general ideas emerging from the approach. There are three stages to the biographical interpretative method. Firstly, the researchers commence the interview very broadly by asking participants a single question, for example, 'to narrate their lived personal or familial histories' (Rosenthal, 1993). Participants typically give accounts of themselves or their families over several hours. Secondly, the researcher asks questions picking up on some of the themes that emerged in the first part of the interview in order to elicit further stories. Thirdly, the researcher asks questions on themes that the participant did not raise. I would not have been able to employ the biographical interpretative method, as many of his participants were senior leaders in the highly pressurized and time-deficient accounting and finance profession, which operates on billable hours where time is money. Thus, allocating several hours to interview them would have been completely unrealistic. However, I was inspired by the method, particularly the questioning

approach outlined, which I adopted within the shorter interviews I conducted in order to elicit stories to anchor and ground accounts by participants.

I was also influenced by the way in which German biographical scholars form probing questions. First, the researchers refrain from starting questions with ‘why’ or ‘what’ which, similar to psychoanalysts, they believe provoke argumentation rather than generating concrete stories. Second, the researchers ask probing questions, which are both neutral and broad, for instance, ‘perhaps you could tell us more about [that theme]?’ I found that similar probing questions enabled me to generate richer data concerning important aspects of an account, for instance, a relationship with a colleague or superior, or an event in which the participant felt mistreated. Thirdly, in conducting group interviews, the researchers explore dynamics using probing questions which either, first, seek to explore what happens when one takes the perspective of another – ‘Can you imagine how [he/she/they] feel(s)?’ – or, second, the impact of a statement on a person – ‘How does it feel hearing [that]?’ (Rosenthal, 2002b). I used similar probing question forms effectively when trying to understand the role of affect in inter-subjective relations (*see* the second principle designed by the researcher, outlined earlier in this section).

Moreover, I was drawn to the idea of *Gestalt*, which is central to BNIM. *Gestalt* can be translated literally from German as ‘form’, ‘shape’ or ‘figure’. The idea purports that in a narrative, the ‘whole’ is greater than its constituents parts and represents an ‘order’, meaning frame or some sort of ‘hidden agenda’ directing the life of an individual (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000b, 2008). The way participants structure life stories enables researchers to formulate readings about conscious, self-presentation and latent meanings behind their accounts (Rosenthal, 1993, 2002a). Thus, *Gestalt* is concerned with understanding accounts holistically and the totality of experience, including its contradictions and inconsistencies. The idea resonates with

FANI method, which is concerned with tracing pathways of association defined by investments rather than rational ones, and such emotional investments are important in understanding the overall direction of accounts (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008).

Although a list of broad questions were drawn up ahead of the interview, I must stress that I was not under duress to pose all of them to the participant. The aim of the interview was to create a relaxed setting in which the participant could provide ideas, events and stories pertinent to their lived experience of work. This approach often opened up the interview to unforeseen and fruitful detours. The central themes of melancholia, violence and broken attachments did not explicitly form part of the main questions posed but emerged as the dialogue unfolded, and probing questions were then used to expand on these themes as and when they emerged (see the following section, Data Interpretation, for further details).

I designed the following interview questions based on the aforementioned ideas and principles. Question 1 – ‘Could you tell me a bit about your career to date?’ - was designed to elicit stories from the careers of participants. I designed the question as such as it did not assume that careers had been either positive or negative. In addition, as it was not demarcated temporally, it meant that there was significant scope for participants to draw on pertinent events from their working lives. Although the question initially prompted descriptive responses regarding, for instance, key career transitions or moves, these narratives started to break down quite quickly, as stories the biographical nature of the question meant that participants began to touch on moments imbued with considerable affect, such as important inter-subject relations. Upon reflection, based on the responses to Question 1, it may have been wiser to have dropped Question 4 – ‘What were the key moments that shaped your career? What helped or held you back?’ – as I felt that the responses were very similar to those given in Question 1.

Questions 2 and 3 – ‘Can you describe what success looked like to you when you first entered the finance and accounting sector and has that changed today’ and ‘In light of the definition you have provided, would you describe your career as successful?’ – attempted to elicit stories relating to success over time. I designed the questions in a way that did not presume what success would be to the participants. I was concerned with understanding why desire had changed in the workplace, and how this pertained to the psychic of life of power. Similarly, the final question, Question 10 – ‘How do you anticipate your future career to evolve?’ – explored the intersection between time, desire and power. Question 7 – ‘Could you tell me a bit about the relationship between your home life and work life?’ – this question was again posed in a way that did not presume tensions between the domestic and public spheres of participants, but as expected, did generate interesting insights concerning how women participants conceptualised and navigated discursively these challenges. Question 5 – ‘Can you describe the objects on your office desk?’ – attempted to understand the significance of objects in the psychic life of participants. I was surprised by how well participants responded to this question, providing highly descriptive explanations of how photographs and bric-a-brac were imbued with stories and eventful memories, and appeared to talk about something concrete.

Questions 6, 8 and 9 were focused on exploring issues regarding exclusion and discrimination. Question 6 – ‘Do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the workplace?’ - generated some of the most interesting responses. In most cases, participants answered this question by referring to the importance of professional attire, as not pertaining to either men or women. However, in a handful cases the question appeared to evoke quite defensive positions, as participants ‘questioned’ the question, particularly its meaning (for an example, *see* the ‘Reflexivity’ section later in this chapter). Regarding Questions 8 and 9 – ‘Have you ever found yourself in a situation at work where you have felt as though you have been left out’ and ‘Do you believe men and women are equal in the workplace?’ – generated responses in which men and women

generally disavowed gender discrimination in the workplace, and attempted to represent their organisation as ‘meritocratic’.

The data collection phase was, however, marred by significant challenges in the recruitment of individual participants and accessing organisations. As the project was collaboratively funded with the ACCA, there was an expectation that the research would focus on gender in the accounting and finance sector to which they provide professional accreditations. It is common for academics to draw on the support of individual gatekeepers embedded in a sector to help connect them with potential organisations and individuals to participate in a research project. In my case, this was particularly important, as I had no senior level contacts in the sector. Although the ACCA had made a verbal commitment to connect me with gatekeepers working in the sector, they did not fulfill this promise, as there were several changes in the custodians of the project during the first two years of the PhD. I spent, therefore, almost two years trying to gain access to individuals and organisations including, sending e-mails and cold-calling senior HR, talent and diversity practitioners to ask whether they would be interested in helping me recruit participants. Despite offering a tailored, free-of-charge report in return, I was perplexed by how few organisations were willing to get involved in the research or at least express interest. At the start of the project, I had planned to conduct interviews in four different types of finance and accounting organisations – one big four, one mid-tier, one public and one private sector organisation. However, due to the difficulties with recruitment and access, I was forced to abandon this plan. At the time, I felt that when I engaged with organisations I was seen as a “student” rather than as a researcher or academic. I felt that if I had had a title, “Dr”, and was lecturing at a university, I might have been taken more seriously. On a few occasions, I cold-called HR, talent and diversity directors, whose details I had found on company websites and LinkedIn, and would politely introduce myself and explain the research, and asked if they would be interested in meeting. However, these conversations were often tense and unfruitful. I was often left with the impression that my dialect or accent had somehow “coloured” the dialogue, perhaps even perceived of as

unprofessional. In other words, I often felt that if I had spoken Received Pronunciation, the accent associated with power and prestige in the UK, then I may have been able to convince and influence the practitioners I spoke to, who sounded as if they were from the southeast of England, to meet with me to discuss the research.

In particular, I was often left feeling quite concerned about some of my encounters with diversity practitioners in the sector. In one case, my academic supervisor had introduced me via email to a diversity practitioner at a big four accounting firm, and outlined the central tenets of the research. I had hoped that the practitioner would be interested in acting as a gatekeeper for the project. However, throughout the email exchange, the tenor of the emails from the practitioner was tense and hostile. At one point in the email exchange, the practitioner claimed that my research was “behind the corporate curve”. I not only found this demeaning to my carefully crafted research method and case but also somewhat delusional. The defense of corporations as more progressive even more than a rigorous and critical research study on equality, flies in the face of vast evidence, readily available to the public, on her own organisation and the sector more broadly, which indicates the painfully slow progress made on such issues over the last two to three decades. One could argue that this practitioner was invested in her own constructions of progress and success, which are likely to be working against equality in her organisation, and deny the reality that diversity and inclusion is nothing more than window dressing in most organisations.

Despite these frustrations and delays, I was, ultimately, able to conduct 66 in-depth interviews with men and women working in the finance and accounting sector. 36 interviews were conducted with women, 16 executives and 20 non-executives, and 30 with men, 15 executives and 15 non-executives. 30 interviews were conducted in a mid-tier accounting firm, 10 in a public sector finance function, and the remaining 26 worked at a

range of big four accounting firms and international or boutique investment banks. One could criticise the design as a binary as it focuses on men / women and successful / less successful employees. One could argue it precludes other minorities such as those from different ethnic or sexual minorities. However, the research did not exclude other categories, as individuals occupying multiple identity categories did participate in the research. I believed the gender split between 30 men and 36 women would enable a good comparison of experiences by gender in the sector. Secondly, the split by number of years worked and seniority would enable a unique insight into the divergences and convergences between the psychic lives of subjects by level of success, and again by gender. I defined executives as those men and women with a minimum of fifteen to twenty years experience in the finance and accounting sectors, holding Heads *of*, partner or leadership positions in their respective organisations. Non-executives are those with a similar number of years experience but have not progressed as far in their careers as those at executive level. These may include those holding middle or upper middle management positions.

This is not to suggest that hierarchy is the only ‘measure’ of success in contemporary organisations. One may find pleasure in alternative aspects of work, such as self-development and gaining a specialty or skill. However, my definition reflects the ‘reality’ of work under neoliberalism, which emphasizes power and privilege as central facets of success. To repudiate this would, firstly, deny ‘reality’ and the thrust of neoliberalism to endow certain individuals with greater rights and privileges than others. Secondly, it also presumes incorrectly that subjects are completely agentic to ‘opt’ in or out of different aspects of neoliberalism. This neglects the power of neoliberalism in tropologically shaping the psyche of the subject, and the perniciousness of this argument in explaining away broader processes of inequality as, for instance, ‘individual choice’. Nevertheless, the way in which I have structured the sample enables some important comparisons to be made in terms of the discursive repertoires and psycho-dynamics embodied by subjects in the workplace and the convergences and divergences by gender and level of success.

The typical principles employed by quantitative and qualitative researchers to rationalize samples do not strictly apply to discourse analysis or psychoanalysis. Whereas quantitative researchers define a sample by how ‘representative’ it is of a population, qualitative researchers are generally concerned with ideas of ‘saturation’ in grounded theory, where interviews, for example, are conducted until no new themes, categories or relationships emerge (Wood and Kroger, 2000). However, in discourse analysis, the researcher is concerned with *variations* in accounts given by participants. Thus, the researcher understands the idea of ‘sample’ in a more “elastic” sense (Wood and Kruger, 2000: 81) in terms of variation of discourses rather than the number of interviews conducted. Psychoanalytically inflected scholars are instead concerned with understanding at depth individual *cases* of participants and the pragmatic theorization of the subject. As I outlined in Chapter 3, I sought an imbrication of aspects of psychoanalysis and discourse analysis and was, therefore, concerned with designing a sample that could bring these ideas together. I was, thus, concerned with defining a sample of participants in which there was no arbitrary ‘cut off point’, where variations in discourses could be identified across interviews, as well as generating quality individual cases within which I could identify psycho-dynamics which could then be used to build affinities with other cases and mapped back to broader, ‘macro’ level neoliberal discourses.

Data Interpretation

The objective of the data analysis was to ‘make sense’ of the puzzling accounts given by participants and understand how these mapped to broader cultural forces within organisations. To achieve this, I adapted and extended the framework of data analysis outlined by Walkerdine et al. (2001). Although I structured the framework into three levels, this was not with the

intention of self-imposing a proscriptive ‘check list’ of items to analyse, but rather to create a ‘rhythm’ to the process of data interpretation and ensure, ultimately, that important aspects were not overlooked. Moreover, the aim of data interpretation was not to test the validity of the data or establish a sense of truth or ‘actual’ psychic reality through corroborative approaches such as triangulation, but instead to identify shared and individual discursive structures, affects and potential psycho-dynamic oscillations.

The first level of interpretation represented a “*surface analysis*” of the data, in which I read and listened back to the interviews. The aim of this stage was to break down the data in manageable and analysable chunks (Tuckett, 2005). These data-parts contained whole or sections of the interpretative repertoires drawn on by participants and, therefore, reflected key themes, stories and sub-plots. I was particularly interested in understanding how participants drew on what I term, ‘heightened imagery’, including metaphors and analogies, to symbolise their psychic reality. I used an online tool called Dedoose to break down the data and interrogate it. Dedoose is a useful online tool, which enables researchers to upload transcriptions and code them. I tested other available tools but often found them clunky and less intuitive, whereas I found Dedoose an easier way to manage the vast amounts of data that I had collected. At this point, I followed a typical iterative qualitative approach of assigning different parts of an interview transcript one or more codes, such as “frustration”, “fear”, and “anger”, and then developing new codes and collapsing old codes into new ones. Codes corresponding to categories, such as “anxiety” or “unknowing-knowingness”, helped inform the initial overarching themes emerging from across all the transcripts, such as the “psychic reality of subjects”. Best efforts were also followed to ensure that there was no deviation in meaning between the different themes and their associated codes.

I outsourced all of the transcriptions to a third party provider. I would agree that one would ideally transcribe all the interviews to understand in detail

not just the words of the participants but also the tone, pitch and rhythm of talk. However, with a twelve month delay in the data collection, it became clear very quickly that there would unlikely be enough time for me to complete the thesis within the three and half year timeframe of funding and transcribe all the interviews on my own. I took the decision to outsource this activity to a professional transcriber in order to save time. Rather than transcribing, therefore, I could allocate more time to the interpretation of the data and writing up. I would normally read through the transcripts once to ensure that the transcription was accurate. I would then analyse the transcripts multiple times in parallel to listening back to the interview. However, familiarisation of the material is much fluid than researchers often portray. Researchers often do not or neglect to mention the significant periods spent informally thinking through many of the ideas and reveries that emerge during and after interviews. Although this section of the chapter defines some of the key steps that I took as a researcher to understand the material I collected, one must not under-estimate the important thinking done in and around direct engagement with the transcriptions and audios themselves.

The second level of interpretation involved the analysis of what I term “*sub-textual interactions*”. Central to this was the identification of associations to others and the affective tenor evoked in the accounts given by the participants. I was, therefore, concerned with identifying how relations with others were discursively constructed, the affective significance of these inter-subjective relations, and how associations connected, disconnected or diverted accounts tropologically. At this point, I became particularly attuned to the presence and implications of psycho-dynamics, such as projection. To initiate the excavation of such dynamics, I would pose myself questions, including: ‘Who is being spoken to or about by the participant?’ ‘What are the implications of this on the identity construction of others, for instance, could these constructions be perceived as ‘grossly’ detrimental in some way? ‘How did [I] feel at that moment e.g. did [I] feel uncomfortable with what was being said?’ and ‘How did this position compare to others in the

accounts given by participants e.g. did the position feel disproportionate in any way or ‘out of the blue’?

Throughout this stage of data analysis, I remained cognizant of the work of Butler, particularly the text, “Giving an account of oneself” (2001, 2005) (*see* Chapter Three for further discussion). Fundamental to the research were the ideas by Butler exploring vulnerability and relationality through ‘dependency’ and ‘addressivity’ in the analysis of the accounts given by participants. More specifically, I was concerned with identifying the events, discourses and relations with others that preceded the subject. Butler explains that as the subject commences their account with the “I”, a fallaciously authoritative way of presenting the self as detached and independent, the unfolding narrative quickly becomes disoriented, as the subject realises that there is no singular “I” but, instead, a narrative of relations with others over time. The “I” is, thus, a “we”, or at least a partial “we”, and indicates how the subject is shaped in relation *to* and *of* others. With this in mind, I was concerned with answering the following questions whilst interpreting the transcripts: ‘How do accounts attempt to present a self-contained “I”?’ ‘Who are the significant ‘others’ in the biographies of participants?’ ‘How do these events, discourses and relations perturb attempts to create a ‘seamless’ biography and self?’ and, ‘Do these inter-relational ties render the subject vulnerable to the other in anyway?’

An important part of this was to identify contradictions across entire accounts, as advocated by influential psychoanalytically inflected scholars such as Wendy Hollway. I was aware that the breaking down of data into analysable chunks and the application of codes and categories ran the risk of decontextualizing accounts and presenting a static, unitary view of subjects. This is not to suggest of course that analysing across accounts for shared themes was not worthwhile, particularly when considering questions regarding how subjects overall psychically registered and conceptualised their workplaces. However, I felt that to answer the aforementioned

questions, there would have to be a ‘turning back’ to each individual case as a way to identify contradictory oscillations in accounts and trace the positions and implicit assumptions of each subject. First, I drew again on the ‘interpretative repertoire’ as a tool to understand inconsistencies within individual stretches of talk. Secondly and moreover, I wanted to trace what they term different “constellational positions” tropologically within individual accounts.

I drew on some of the principles of *Gestalt* as a way to keep the ‘whole’ account in mind. As discussed in the previous section, *Gestalt* is a German word meaning ‘shape’, ‘outline’ or ‘figure’. Werthemier, the founder of *Gestalt* psychology, attempted to address the problem of decontextualisation by arguing that the significance of an account can be represented in the function of a position within its wider framework, for instance, its culture, sentence or narrative (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008). The idea of *Gestalt* is perplexing, complex and fascinating. There is however very little work on the idea and there is, I would suggest, considerably more work to be done by organisational scholars to understand its significance to qualitative research enquiries. However, I found the ideas surrounding *Gestalt* useful in beginning to conceptualise individual participant cases. I approached the idea through the following initial questions: ‘What constellations of positions emerge within individual accounts?’ ‘Do these positions indicate a central preoccupation?’ ‘How might preoccupations be shaping the positions that emerge within an account?’ ‘What ‘figure’ emerges from the account and how can this be represented e.g. ‘flat’, ‘deep’, ‘narrow’ or ‘shallow’?’ ‘Are the accounts affectively latent?’ ‘Can accounts be reconceptualised through colour, for example, noir, and what is the significance of it, for instance, does it represent sadness or solitude?’ ‘What contours can be drawn on between the constellations in individual accounts and those of others?’ ‘How can these individual and shared contours be mapped to broader social forces within the workplace and / or sector?’

I used Pen Portraits, similar to Hollway and Jefferson (2000b), a one page A4 summary-description of the interview with each participant, as a substitute for keeping the whole in mind. In each portrait, I included some standard biographical data, such as the seniority and pseudonym of the participant, and flagged central themes in the account, such as examples of ‘anxiety’ or ‘anger’. I also attempted to integrate, where it felt appropriate, his voice, memories and feelings at specific moments of the interview, as a way to bring reflexivity to the foreground and not to render it as a trivial ‘after-thought’. However, the central aim of the Pen Portrait was to enable me to trace, firstly, constellations of positions through whole accounts and, secondly, contradictory oscillations from different positions within accounts. This included identifying moments when participants trailed off the question posed, and how perhaps returning to a consistent idea or theme might reflect the central preoccupation of the participant. The Pen Portraits were, therefore, largely descriptive accounts of the interview. This technique enabled me to create a sense of ‘fragmentary wholeness’ and agency, whilst keeping in mind the shared contours of subject accounts. However, due to the sheer number of interviews and the delay in conducting them, I must make a candid admission that many of the Pen Portraits remain as ‘rough’ first drafts. However, they provided me, even at that level, with an insightful way to interpret individual cases.

Although the sense of wholeness came accumulatively from the interpretation of transcripts, field notes, and memories of the encounter, I must also stress at this point that with ideas such as *Gestalt*, no one subject can ever be fully known, particularly from just one in-depth interview. Social constructivist scholars may argue that *Gestalt* presents the subject as homogenous and, moreover, static. However, I have always understood *Gestalt* from a “performative” perspective in which the shape of the subject, similar to sediments, gather, creep, drift or thin out temporally. This is not, therefore, an absolute ‘shape’ of the subject but a dynamic one, forming a temporary solid or partial subject-“shadow(s)”. However, this dynamic view of *Gestalt* still recognises how experiences do not simply ‘pass through’ the subject but are carried with them over time in variable but significant ways.

It is also worth noting that I often felt touched by my encounters with the participants in the sense that, following an encounter and later again after spending time interpreting the data, I was often recalled of them. Perhaps the best example of this was when I would anonymously quote ideas or antidotes from my participants during conversations with friends or colleagues, indicating how an established relationship continued to shape my subjectivity. This represents my own dynamic imagination of the participants and the intimacy I felt we had constructed together, although arguably it is a rather one-sided construction. In this way, the sense of the subject sometimes came through my own indirect thoughts, affects and fantasies.

In the third and final stage of interpretation, I was concerned with understanding, what I term, the “*harmonics of the relationship*” established with the participant during the course of the interview. Broadly speaking, I paid significant attention to their own feelings during the interview and contemplated these afterwards in the writing up of field notes (please see next section, Reflexivity, for further details). Moments of comfortableness, boredom or nervousness prompted me to contemplate whether these affects indicated examples of projections from the participant. This meant, in part, paying attention to non-verbal cues such as body and facial expressions, and the pace and pitch of the voice (Strømme et al., 2010). Moreover, by turning to one’s psychic and biographical life, I contemplated what parts of myself the participant spoke to and the significance of my own responses. This raised interesting questions for me including: ‘Who do I represent to the research participant?’ ‘What part of my subjectivity is touched by the participant?’ ‘What feelings are evoked in me?’ ‘What could be the significance of these affects to the research participant?’ This enabled me to begin to move behind discourse in order to understand the construction of subjectivities in the interview. I wrote ethnographic notes as a way to recall my own sentiments during the interview (Hollway, 2012). However, again, due the sheer number and frequency of interviews towards the end of the

data collection phase, ethnographic notes could not be written for all the interviews. I did find, however, that listening back to interviews evoked many of the feelings and memories experienced in the interview process so much of this data was not lost. However, in some cases, new ones did emerge. I was surprised to find, for instance, that some of the participants who I had interviewed and thought were open, candid and friendly with me appeared, after analysing and listening back to the interview, much more distant and, in some cases, patronising than I had initially felt following the interview.

Reflexivity

I was surprised to encounter participants, within the highly corporate settings of the finance and accounting sector, who gave accounts of past events or relationships at work that evoked sad or frustrating memories. As I sometimes registered these moments psychically during and after the interview, reflexivity became an important tool for me to remain thoughtful and self-aware within this affective complexity. However, reflexivity remains a notoriously complex term to unpack and practice, especially when trying to understand the role of affect (Doyle, 2012). Feminist scholars have prompted researchers to consider how they mediate each stage of the research process, for instance, regarding power differentials during interviews or in the representation of the participant in writing. The concept remains nevertheless very challenging to pin down beyond a simplistic description of differences in identity categories between the researcher and participant, what I often refer to as the 'I'm a woman, therefore, I can interview and understand women' refrain. This, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, ignores the polymorphous and asymmetric positions, categories and experiences of the subject (Kelan, 2014).

I wanted to use this opportunity, however, to draw on principles from

psychoanalytical epistemology to develop an approach more attune to affect in the provision of reflection. I was interested in exploring the idea that one could use their subjectivity as an instrument of ‘knowing’ the research participant. I drew on aspects of the theory of *Reverie* by Wilfred Bion to frame and practice reflexivity during all stages of the project, outlined in the previous section. *Reverie* is a word with French origin referring to a dream, thought or fanciful musing. Bion, extending the ideas of the relational theorist Melanie Klein, explains that when a baby feels overwhelmed, perhaps from hunger or fear, they may project this material onto the parent and this impacts their thoughts and feelings. *Reverie* refers to the capacity of the parent to sense and make sense of the experiences of their baby, and provide the required comfort. When the parent is able to ‘contain’ the projection, the baby learns how experiences can be thought about and tolerated. However, if the parent fails to become the ‘container’ for the baby, perhaps as a result of their own anxiety, they may project these sensations back out again.

Although Bion uses *Reverie* to refer specifically to early childhood development, the idea has been transferred and applied with adults, most notably by Ogden (1997a, 1997b) within the clinical setting. Ogden (1997b) usefully conceptualizes *Reverie* as the spaces “between the [musical] notes of the spoken words constituting the analytic dialogue” (p.107). An ‘analytic third’ or third subjectivity is asymmetrically constructed and experienced consciously and unconsciously between the analyst and analysand. In order to feel viscerally these moments, the analyst loses himself or herself in a dream-like state in which memory and desire are abandoned. The analyst has to pay attention to the total situation as a way to move beyond words, expressions and micro-movements, and engage with feeling states including, for instance, ruminations, fantasies, bodily sensations, perceptions, tunes, and phrases that run through their mind. Following the analytical encounter, Ogden describes the most ‘alive’ moments as a way of holding onto the reverie before it is claimed into the unconscious. Although the application of *Reverie* by Ogden occurs in the clinical setting, this does not mean that qualitative researchers cannot

appropriate aspects of the theory into their enquiries. However, its use raises a number of questions for the researcher: How is one able to access their ‘sense of self’ as a way of understanding *Reveries* and the participant? What is the significance of these experiences to the psychic and biographical life of the researcher? And, do *Reveries* have any significance or are they not just ‘subjective’ understandings of the research encounter?

I sought to address these questions in three ways. Firstly, I engaged with a multi-dimensional understanding of *Reverie*, allowing it, as Hollway (2012) suggests, to acquire a penumbra of meanings as a way to avoid specifically defining it. Hollway (2010, 2011, 2012) has attempted to fill up the meaning of *Reverie* through engaging with a number of approaches, such as psychoanalytical observations, supervision with a psychoanalyst, and group-interpretations of data. One approach presented by Hollway (2012) involved addressing reflexive questions at the end of interviews, such as ‘what are my hopes and fears for the participant?’ This prompted me to the importance of reflexive field notes made during and subsequent to an interview, as a way to reflect on the affective material generated in an encounter. When I did not take field notes, due to a lack of time, I would instead listen back to the audio recording of the interview as a way to reconstruct the affective encounter established with the participant, in a similar way to Hollway (2012). This approach was an important way for me to keep the meaning of the affective data ‘alive’ (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000b).

Secondly, during the course of the interview, I attempted to access *Reveries* by relaxing and allowing the words of the participant to wash over me, as Ogden recommends. I was, therefore, able to pay attention to the ‘whole’ interview, rather than just ‘what the participant said’. This does not contradict active listening on behalf of the researcher but, instead, extends or goes beyond it. I consider this to have two main features. Firstly, relaxing rather than anxiously on the edge of one’s seat, worryingly hanging onto

every syllable uttered by the participant, is likely to prompt the researcher into a defensive position, and perhaps making conversations shorter and affectively shallower. For instance, if one is nervous, there is a real risk of rushing through the interview guide, missing opportunities to ask important impromptu questions, and evading emotional or harsher moments emerging during the course of an encounter. This was particularly important in my case as I was often interviewing quite senior men and women, with very little time, who were often anxious themselves. Secondly, whilst remaining attentive to what is uttered by the participant, *Reverie* widens the scope of reflexivity as a way to become cognizant of inter-subjective dynamics. This means drawing on other important but regularly sidelined aspects of interaction, such as bodily movements, the psychic register of the researcher, pain, silences and humour, amongst many others. My position is that during an encounter, sense making is evoked not just from what is verbally relayed by the participant but also from multiple other cues. Therefore, over-focusing on the individual ‘words’ of the participant might risk losing sense of what is *actually* being communicated by the participant.

I found the recommendations by Holmes (2012) particularly useful in helping me formulate questions to pose myself based on my experience of *Reverie* immediately following an interview: Was there any ‘harshness’ to the response by the participant? Did the participant seem troubled by the question? Did they attempt to deflect or even dismiss the question posed? What were the bodily states of the participant (how did bodily adjustments made by the participant mirror what they said, for instance, did they jolt forward when expressing a particular perspective)? What were the perceptions, feeling states and bodily responses of the researcher at particularly moments of the interview? How did the nature of the researcher’s words reflect this? I was also interested in the idea of the ‘container-contained’ by Bion to understand whether I was able to *contain* the projections of the participant and respond in a meaningful way (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) rather than reassuring the participant or diverting the dialogue.

Thirdly, I was concerned with how the encounter engaged with my biography and, in turn, the affective states evoked. I wanted to use how I experienced these affects as a way to pinpoint or create affinities with the experiences of the participant (Grotstein, 2007). I often found this to be a considerable and emotional task, as it required me to put myself at the service of the interpretation, as a way of understanding the interaction (Cartwright, 2004). Ogden suggests that these everyday details of the life of the researcher do not indicate inattentiveness or narcissism, but represent symbolic forms given to the inarticulate, and often not yet felt, experience of the participant. I approached this by addressing some of the following questions: ‘Could that have been me in [that situation]?’ ‘What feeling states would I arrive at in [that situation]?’ ‘What memories do these feeling states evoke?’ ‘What did I feel in [that particular situation]?’ ‘What connections can, therefore be made between the participant and I?’

There are lots of reveries that touched my subjective knowledge, calling on different aspects of my psych-biography, for instance, my class background or my experiences of working in highly corporate environments. I would like to stress at this point the importance of *Reveries* in alerting me to some of the key themes emerging from the study, for instance, how solitude and loneliness appeared to colour the ‘background’ to accounts given, forming the *Gestalt* of subjects. Whilst respecting both my own voice and that of others, within the relatively small scope of this section, I will now draw on a few examples to demonstrate how one may begin to employ *Reverie* in qualitative research enquiries as a way of ‘knowing’ the other.

One example of *Reverie* I experienced emerged in dialogue with Sharon, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm:

Sharon (Executive): I think it was - and this is something I really believe in for many women - is about having the belief

that you can do whatever you want to do. I don't think I didn't have the belief, I just didn't know what was out there. So I thought that doing as I was told and being efficient and doing a good job was good enough; it wasn't good enough, you have to think outside the box and what else you can do. Certainly, what I have learnt over the last 10 years, the more you do, the more you learn, the more you can develop and it becomes self-perpetuating. Therefore, I am a strong believer in coaching and supporting people in that they should not apologise to themselves, there is actually lots of things that they should do. But, we - I am not sure who we is but in the widest term – are very good at making those opportunities available to people. So I think I have thought probably in my 30s well, being a Partner is what it is about, so I am just going to be a Partner, but actually if you really think about it, what is my business case, what is so special about me? Nothing particular, haven't done anything. I am not bad, but I have not done anything to make me stand out from the crowd, if that makes sense. So I think I would advise the younger me to be more strategic, to really think what is out there and really believe that I can go for it, rather than lots of things that I did go and look at but I don't think I did it in the right way. Having a mentor, somebody who is going to help me with that, rather than having to do it all myself.

In the line, “having a mentor, somebody who is going to help me with that, rather than having to do it all myself”, I noticed how, firstly, the pitch and pace of her voice heightened and, secondly, she leaned forward as she uttered the words. It was at this moment that something was triggered in me and a sense of disbelief fell upon me. The idea that Sharon had had to do everything herself touched a previously unarticulated element of myself. I had grown up in a working class family on a council estate in Liverpool, and had attended an under-performing Catholic secondary school for many years until I decided to apply to the state funded grammar school to study my A-Levels. Although I had not been explicitly encouraged by the school to apply for Oxbridge, I decided to do it anyway, and eventually won a place to read Geography at Oxford.

The knowledge and experience of transcending significant socio-economic boundaries remains etched in my subjectivity, as I knew from my early

teens that I would have to work especially hard to be successful in life. However, I had never thought about it in the terms that Sharon had articulated, as ‘having to do things *by oneself*’. At that moment of the interview, sadness was evoked in me, as it dawned upon me the solitude and anxiety I must have endured, drawing on my own psychic capacities as the *only* means by which I could fulfil my fantasies as a young disadvantaged man. Moreover, this contradicted my ethics framed by ideas of solidarity which to continue to furnish the ‘Scouse-psyche’, emanating largely from the collective memories of the region’s industrial, shipping, Gaelic and internationalist heritage.

This *Reverie* prompted me to consider whether the experience of Sharon could have been me? The contexts and psych-biographies of both subjects are, however, very different. Sharon is a southern English, middle class, privately educated, woman and a senior executive in a multi-national corporation, who has had legitimate challenges ascending an organisation dominated by men, who are largely similarly white, southern, heterosexual and middle class. I am, on the other hand, a gay man, from a working class family, with little financial or material wealth, who identifies as “Scouse-British”, and who is seeking secure academic employment. However, what I am suggesting is that my own experience of *Reverie* during the interview, which touched on elements of my own psych-biography in dialogue with Sharon, constructed a sense of affinity between the two of us regarding, firstly, utilising one’s own psychic excess as a means to fulfil one’s own fantasies and, secondly, the frustration, anxiety and loneliness that this evokes.

Another example of *Reverie* that I experienced emerged in dialogue with Judy, an executive in an international investment bank:

Darren: Do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the workplace?

Judy: Not quite sure I understand the question.

Darren: Do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the work place?

Judy: Do you mean generally, as a person, does it matter how you present yourself?

Darren: I'm asking here about men and women - so do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the work place? It's not a trick question.

Judy: No, I'm not trying to be tricky, I'm actually trying to work out what you're actually asking; are you saying does your personal presentation matter whether you're a man or a woman? Is one question. So I'm not quite sure what you're asking.

Darren: There are a number of ways that people have answered this question, so there's no right way... you obviously mentioned one aspect there, so I think there's no one way to answer the question - it's whether you think who would address that question...

Judy: I think it matters how you present yourself full stop...

The majority of participants had no challenges interpreting and responding to this question and, generally, provided answers regarding the importance of professional attire regardless of gender and in spite of the perceived sartorial errors of women, or explored the importance of accent or attributes, such as confidence. On a few occasions when the question created ambiguity, the participants cautiously offered me two interpretations, for instance, 'I have two ideas: one concerning dress and the other with...' In line with psychoanalytically informed research methods, I always tried to withhold from defining the broad questions presented and, therefore, imposing further on the responses of the participants.

My responses reflect a sense of panic and defensiveness. I felt that my intelligence and respectability were under-attack from Judy. Her responses

felt aggressive and disproportionate in the context of an academic interview. However, my reverie pointed me towards, firstly, moments of defensiveness in the accounts of Judy, and secondly, the inter-subjective dynamics that she constructs in the workplace. Thus, overall, such moments helped me to sense the psychic life of subjects similar to Judy as ‘flat’ and affectively ‘shallow’. Feminist scholars have alerted researchers to power dynamics during interviews but often argue that it is academics who wield greater power in such circumstances as they control the questions, the interpretation and dissemination of outcomes (Scharff, 2010). I agree that this a real risk when interviewing vulnerable groups (McDowell, 2001; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998). However, “studying up” can bring with it lots of risks for the researcher themselves, such as resistance by the participant, sabotage, refusals to respond to certain questions, relaying scripted organisational lines to the researcher, or even face being patronised by the participant (Letherby, 2003; Richards, 1996; Welch et al., 2002).

In my interview with Judy, I felt backed into a subordinating dynamic in which I somehow felt as though I had done something wrong, which reminded me of some of the autocratic and demeaning encounters I had endured working in highly individualistic, impersonal and aggressive corporate environments over many years. This moment and my reaction to it had reminded me of a manager I had once worked with at the start of a new project. I recall her as a distant and brittle figure, short in temper and frail in demeanour, grey, with tightly tied back black hair and no-make up, and motionless, with few expressions, cold, and hardened. I still remember her phone call in which she shouted and berated me, despite only starting on the project two weeks earlier, as a fresh university graduate. I felt incredibly violated and very upset and the experience prompted me to look for opportunities elsewhere.

It was curious that, a few years later, I ran into a former colleague who informed that this manager had, in her words, been “going through a tough

time” herself on this project. My impression was that my former colleague was offering this to me in part as a rationale for her aggressive behaviours towards me. This raises the question also posed by Gill (2009) regarding the role of scholars in examining how subjects passively persecute others as a result of their own violence and, perhaps, how we can leverage psychoanalytical methods and theories to understand this process? Although the experience evoked considerable anger in me, I am now more inclined to be concerned about her persecutory capacity. This raises a number of questions regarding: What trauma had she endured that would provoke her to take up a persecutory position? How did she feel in that situation? What were her thoughts regarding her relative lack of success for someone her age, as a manager? What were her thoughts and feelings after she had called me? How would she defensively rationalise her actions?

My encounter with Deborah, an executive in a multi-national investment bank, was a good example of the container-contained theory. I had had some initial email exchanges with Deborah that felt short and impersonal, and this culminated in the very last minute cancellation of our first interview. I therefore had serious reservations about meeting with Deborah ahead of our rescheduled second meeting. When I arrived, he was shown to a large corporate suite. I took a seat at the heavily varnished oak eight-seater table, and nervously arranged the recorder, note pad, information and consent forms before Deborah arrived. When Deborah entered the room, I caught her North American accent, and imagined her as a cold, hard, ‘Americanised’ corporate executive, formed also in response to our initial email exchanges. However, quite quickly, it became clear that she was a very warm, open and welcoming person, and I began to relax. As the interview progressed, Deborah shared with me how her ‘boss shouts and bullies her’, and appeared to be on the verge of crying:

Deborah (Executive): So this is ... what's held me back? I have a boss who yells and bullies; and I'm a 47 year old woman and I still break out in a sweat when I need to call my boss. And

he yells and bullies at me still to this day. And so, on the one hand you want to, you know, it's on me for some reason that I irritate him, and I don't irritate many people, I irritate myself and him probably the most, and my husband sometimes, but it's something I've never been able to fix...

Darren: No, it's not uncommon. I had a senior woman talk about something very similar actually in her role, so yeah, it's quite ... it's more common than you think, really, that is.

Deborah (Executive): Yeah, it is a shame and it makes you realise how you should, it's always saying how you should handle yourself when you're managing people and managing problems, because his behaviour does create similar, everybody else, and you kind of adapt to that kind of behaviour as well and it kind of, you know, spoils the pool a little bit.

The dialogue immediately evoked in me a feeling of despair for Deborah and I was surprised to find myself holding back my tears in response to her admission. Why did I, however, feel the need to stop myself from crying? Psychoanalysts suggest that it is better to reflect the reality of the emotional experience of the participant than to attempt to reassure them. Through *Reverie*, I had felt aspects of the sadness and despair of Deborah but felt nervous exploring this with her, not for ethical reasons, but due to the fact that the interview was held in a highly constrained, impersonal corporate environment which does not promote emotional exchanges (please see the final section, *Ethical Dilemmas*, for further discussion on the ethical boundaries of the research encounter). My attempt to reassure Deborah that 'such misogynistic workplace relations were unfortunately common' may reflect my incapacity to contain such emotional material within the constraints of a highly corporate environment. It would have been better if I had responded by perhaps shedding a tear, which reflects how I felt in that moment, or with words to the effect, 'that is terrible, you must feel awful to be in that situation'. This would have demonstrated a greater sense of emotional containment.

In this section of the chapter, I sought to draw upon and transform aspects of the theory of Reverie by Wilfred Bion into qualitative research methods. By drawing on a number of key examples, I have attempted to show how reveries alerted him to key themes in the research such as defensiveness, loneliness and the role of the researcher is containing the projections of the participants. There are many other embodied aspects of the interview, such as pain or breathlessness that I had not thought about either before, during or after the interview, which could be explored in a further study.

Ethical dilemmas

The use of psychoanalysis in qualitative research remains deeply controversial on ethical grounds (cf. Kvale, 1996, 1999, 2003). For instance, the use of what Kvale (1999) describes as “concealed” psychoanalytical techniques (p.106) runs the risk of concretely defining and pathologising the participant, without their prior knowledge or consent, in ways that they may fail to recognise or find extremely hurtful. As I was adapting some psychoanalytical principles into my methodology, I was well aware of this ethical dilemma. As a potential work-around, I considered informing participants ahead of the interview that the study sought to explore subjectivities at work through a psychoanalytical lens, perhaps even divulging to them that one aim would be to uncover psycho-dynamics in talk. However, I believed that this approach was problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it ignores how non-psychoanalytical work is also informed by theories and ideas, which may also indirectly position the researcher as an omnipotent ‘expert’ in the research process and, consequently, work to deauthorise the participant. Secondly, the idea that I could gain an definitive agreement on consent from a subject who is psychoanalytically theorized as ‘fragmented’ to explore ‘implicit’ motivations in talk feels somewhat naïve (Hollway, 2012; Holmes, 2012). Moreover, this might come across as unprofessional, raising questions about what my motives were, and indeed,

whether I am qualified to engage with matters that most consider to be therapeutic.

I nevertheless asked all interviewees, firstly, to read an information sheet describing the project at a high level and, secondly, sign a consent form to confirm that they were happy to participate in the research and for material shared during the interview to inform academic and practitioner publications. This was a prerequisite for conducting research under the ethical guidelines of the university. However, I avoided providing specific details to the participant, in particular how the study sought to explore inequality and discrimination through an adapted psychoanalytical lens. I was cognizant that providing specific details to the participant ran the risk of, firstly, evoking anxiety and, secondly, imposing and directing the interview dialogue in ways that contradicted the principles espoused in discourse analysis and the free association method. For instance, participants might become preoccupied with ‘saying the wrong thing’ during an interview, which had been set up as directly ‘exploring gender discrimination or inequality in the workplace’. This would likely generate ‘shallow’ responses in which participants sought to paraphrase corporate mantras on diversity and equality. This would only scratch the surface on subjectivity, revealing little about the role of affect and inter-relational ties on shaping the psychic life of the participants. The central purpose of the consent form, from my perspective, was instead to inform the participants that their anonymity would be guaranteed, using pseudonyms and removing any other identifiable details including geography, age, previous organisation(s) or exact role titles. This meant, ultimately, that any later interpretation remained unidentifiable and detached from the individual. This was particularly important as many of the women and men who participated in the research occupied high profile positions in the accounting and finance sector, and therefore might be easily identifiable (Taylor, 2001).

The idea that a researcher would make an interpretation beyond the dialogue raised another ethical dilemma regarding whether this should be fed back to them. One key difference between the clinical and research settings concerns the time horizons of each. Whereas psychoanalytically inflected interviews are typically conducted on a one-off basis, the clinical encounter may be held for an hour a day for several days a week, often-over many years. This does not mean that a single encounter cannot generate psychoanalytical interpretations but that this encounter cannot be compared with past ones. As Ogden (1992) suggests, 'there is no difference in the analytic process in the first meeting and the analytic process in any other meeting' (p.226). Another key difference between the clinical and research settings is that, whereas in the former interpretations occur during the encounter, in the latter these interpretations occur afterwards (Holmes, 2012). I was, therefore, focused on generating data and was extremely careful not to initiate any form of feedback, which could be constructed or perceived by the participant as a form of therapeutic guidance (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). This also raises questions with regards to power and control, as feminist scholars often argue that researchers hold power in the interview setting, particularly as they are responsible for the interpretation and public dissemination of the outcomes. However, even if I had attempted to work around this ethical dilemma, for instance, by sharing my interpretations with the participants, this may have only generated defensive responses, in which participants amend their responses as a way not to appear, for instance, exclusionary in the workplace. In more extreme cases, this activity may lead to participants withdrawing their contributions based on the analysis of the researcher.

However, there were a few occasions when participants were interested in understanding the key outcomes from the research. I often felt that participants were seeking assurances from me regarding, for instance, whether their responses were 'normal' in relation to what others said. In such cases, I provided some key ideas from across the entire project, rather than concerning what the participant had said. I felt ethically obliged to give something meaningful back to the participant, as a way for them to interpret

their experience of the interview. The amount of information shared with the participant did however depend on the relationship established, and whether the participant appeared genuinely willing to understand my thoughts, and would not deflect or trivialise this.

When representing the participants in the thesis and elsewhere, I took significant steps in the design of the theoretical framework (*see* Chapter 3) to ensure that they were not individualised or pathologised. I am aware that some interpretations, for instance, such as framing neoliberal psycho-discursive dynamics as ‘narcissistic’, ‘sado-masochistic’, or representing some positions as caring and others as persecutory, could be harmful to participants if they were to find out, or they would simply contest them. However, I was not overall assessing or examining the individual themselves but the interpretative repertoires drawn on by participants. I took a number of steps to minimise this risk. Firstly, by tracing what I term ‘the contours of the neoliberal subject’, I was able to show how individual accounts chimed with the psychic reality of others in the workplace. Secondly, I also attempted to map these contours with broader socio-economic changes and discourses as a way to show how contemporary subjectivities are shaped in part as a response to their environment. Thirdly, although there was a focus on individual cases, this was done as a way to show variability and inconsistency tropologically and highlighting the shifting constellational positions in the accounts given. Thus, this shows how subjectivities are dynamic and agentic. Fourthly, even when psychoanalytical principles were used, they were used pragmatically. For instance, in the case of complex theories such as reverie, I was careful not to conflate completely my experiences with those of the participant, as a way of definitively knowing the other.

Conclusion

This chapter developed an indicative qualitative research method inspired by psychoanalysis epistemology and ontology. The aim of the research was to attempt to redress some of the key challenges often faced by qualitative researchers, particularly around generating richer, less defensive interview material and defining a more meaningful approach to reflexivity. I suggest that psychoanalytical principles taken from, for instance, the Freudian inspired ‘Free Association Narrative Interview Method’ by Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000b, 2008, 2009) and ‘Reverie’ by Wilfred Bion, can help scholars to move beyond the verbal or ‘what is said’, to a more complex exploration of how affect and psycho-dynamics structure individual and shared subject accounts. In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I begin to explore some of the empirical data collected in the field using the aforementioned methods, and begin interpreting this using the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five

The Phallic Economy

Self-confidence has emerged as the new imperative in contemporary organisations. However, what makes “confidence” distinctive is its gendered address to women, popularised in the best selling books, *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013) and the *The Confidence Code* (Kay and Shipman, 2014), where female confidence at work forms their central argument. Organisations have, thus, responded to this by “changing the women”, for instance, delivering courses ‘to equip’ women with the “confidence” they need to be successful at work. Despite its omnipotence in organisational parlance, there has been very little research critically exploring confidence. Existing scholarship has tended to examine confidence from a Foucauldian inspired perspective and, in particular, exploring the role of confidence ideologically within neoliberalism (Gill and Orgad, 2015; McRobbie, 2015).

This chapter extends this scholarship by rendering the analysis psychosocial through exploring the individual confidence tropes of men and women, and mapping these back to broader neoliberal, “phallic frames” of work. The central aim of the chapter is to show how confidence is constructed interrelationally, within a “phallic economy”, between men and women in the finance and accounting sector. The idea of the phallus is drawn on in this chapter to symbolize how confidence tropes are phallic in nature, emerging from positions of dominance, power and aggression. I argue that women are constructed in the finance and accounting sector as bearing a “confidence deficit” for not expressing qualities associated with confidence, such as aggression and narcissism. I explore how women self-recriminate for expressing qualities disassociated with confidence, such as such reflexivity,

contemplation and pragmatism. I argue that “Confidence Repertoires” have a pernicious force as they, firstly, distract women from broader discriminatory norms that favour masculine behaviours and, secondly, individualise this as something that women need to self-manage and respond to on their own. I explain how this positions women in an “ideological dilemma” (Billig et al., 1988) as, despite attempting to distance themselves from qualities such as aggression and defensiveness, they sometimes felt obliged to mimic them to ensure that they did not fall behind colleagues with regards with remuneration and promotion. The implication of this is that women indirectly construct qualities associated with masculinity as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the “phallic economy”.

In the final section of the chapter, I explore how the accounts given by women focused on the desire to gain new skills and experiences. I explain how this was curious as it contrasted sharply with the desires held by men who were largely concerned with accruing power, wealth and prestige at work. Even when women did hold phallic frames of success, these appeared to shift temporally as women sought pleasure in the self. I suggest that this *turning inwards* by women towards self-pleasure could reflect an attempt “to plug” or “fill in” a sense of lack generated by their self-beratement for failing to express qualities associated with confidence. However, in some cases, the accounts given by women contradictorily continued to recognise the importance of phallic frames of success, for instance, assuming senior positions in organisations. I suggest that this could represent a form of “psychic elongation” in which the phallus distracts, particularly non-executive women, from what is *actually* required for success at work and, therefore, open up greater opportunities for men, endowing them with greater privileges. This could point towards a much deeper psychic life of the phallus in reshaping tropologically the psyche and pleasure of neoliberal subjects. I conceptualise this position, overall, as a “sodomasochistic, up-down position” as, whilst women self-berate for not expressing qualities associated with confidence and wish, therefore, to be psychically “cracked open” and subordinated, at the mercy of the phallus, they also appear to gain

significant pleasure from self-development and improvement. This position can be described as “up-down” as despite bringing self-pleasure and enjoyment, this appears to distract women from what is *actually* required to attain success within the phallic economy.

Uncontrollable Phallic Desires

The majority of executive and non-executive men interviewed held well-defined “phallic desires” regarding making promotion, assuming senior level roles, and increasing their remuneration. However, the accounts given by men rarely touched on the harsher ‘realities’ of their careers. The few accounts that did shed light on the tumultuous journeys ventured by men revealed the adverse implications on, for instance, their health and inter-relational ties. Drawing on some of these detrimental cases, this section explores how men position themselves at the mercy of the phallus and expose themselves to the potential damaging effects of, for instance, extensive and intensive work and the imperative to be mobile under neoliberalism. The implication of the three cases in this section is that men can indeed “have it all” in the finance and accounting sector, but that they do not appear to realise the potentially adverse effects that pursuing the phallus can have on either themselves or others until it is too late.

Peter, a finance executive in the public sector, associated pursuing his career ambitions with the eventual collapse of his marriage. In the following part, Peter gives an account of what he thought success concerned earlier on in his life and how it has changed today:

Peter (Executive): When I was 12 and it was a very humble beginning. So, what I thought of as a successful person back then, was someone who owned their house rather than rented a house or

lived in a council house... someone who had a car, perhaps two cars was a really well-off person ...these kind of relatively modest levels of income, £25,000, my dad never earned more than 22 in his life, so I thought £25,000, if I could earn £25,000, I'd be really well-off ...and I could support a family of, like my dad had four kids ...I could support at least four kids, Catholic background, with an income of £25,000, I would have my own house and my own car, that was success. It's changed ...I'm talking about is more inclined towards less materialistic things and more about the roundness of a person now ...I would regard success as someone who is a content person, who has worked hard and earned the right to own his own house or have his own car and things like that ...and they've managed their lives in a disciplined fashion.

Peter describes his background as “very humble” with his father earning no more than twenty-two thousand pounds per annum. This indicates that Peter grew up in a less privileged, working class background. He constructs a successful person at this time as someone who owned, rather than rented, their home, perhaps, with two cars, and earning a “relatively modest” income of twenty-five thousand pounds per annum. Peter describes himself as Catholic and explains how his desire to earn a modest income would have enabled him to ‘afford’ children similar to his father. The function of the account is to construct Peter in deeply patriarchal ways, as the male, Catholic breadwinner, providing for his housewife and children. However, Peter has now climbed to a senior finance position in his organisation and earns considerably more than twenty-five thousand pounds per annum. However, Peter now constructs success less in terms of wealth, affordability or “materialistic things”, and more with the “roundness” of a person both in terms of what they have achieved financially and the “disciplined” management of their personal lives.

This turn was motivated by his experience of divorce and Peter returned to it throughout his account, which appeared to frame much of his sense of self:

Peter (Executive): ...age teaches you that focusing solely on the material is an expensive thing to do ...chasing that big job ...all the things that go with it to such an extent that you do it regardless of the aspirations of, for example, your partner ...my wife at the time ...I relegated ... I knew that she didn't want to go down to London but I thought I would be able to... if I put the kids into a public school and I did a good enough job and got a salary increase and I got a big bonus and I did all these things, but I could somehow persuade her that she should buy into that, and despite having got all of those things, it didn't work and what ensued was the unhappiest period of my life ...the reason that I admire the roundness of someone ...he's able to do something I couldn't.

Peter describes how he “relegated” his wife in the pursuit of his desires, as he believed that materialistic gains, such as receiving a “big bonus” or privately educating their children, would persuade her to “buy into” the move to London. Alas, however, this did not appear persuade her. The implication of the account by Peter is that achieving wealth, success and privilege, “having got all these things”, does not necessarily buy happiness. Although Peter has since remarried, photographs of various family members adorning the wall of his office on the forty-sixth floor, performatively act to remind him not just of his loss but also of what he must do differently to evade such pain in the future:

Peter (Executive): the divorce had a big impact on me and because you realise unless you look after something, it's not going to be there... friends will come and go throughout your life, you're very young, but when you get to my age, you realise these people come into your life and they can even stay for five or six years sometimes, but then they go because you either move house or they move house or something happens, you might fall out with one another, but the family ...the thing that you've bonded with the most, if you've done it properly will be there forever, or at least through your whole life. That to me is quite important that I retain, you know, I lost one in a sense, one marriage, I don't want to do it again ...I never want to do it again and I suppose that is quite a change because I never really considered divorce as a

possibility when I was younger ...I was not aware of the threat, whereas now I am ...when you're aware of a threat, you do things about it don't you? And one of the things is you become more conscious of these people; so I have them there just constantly reminding me of the individuals and every photograph I look at I see a personality.

Peter laments how the divorce had a “big impact” on him and how, when he was younger, he had never considered divorce “a possibility” or “threat”. This denial could link to his Catholic upbringing, which places significant importance on the sanctity of marriage. The account also constructs friendship as unstable, transient and insecure in comparison to kinship networks, which are positioned as permanent and constant. However, Peter contradicts himself by explaining that families are only long-standing providing one has “done it properly”, which underscores the precariousness of kinship networks. The photographs ‘constantly remind’ him to be “conscious of” his family in order to “retain” them. The implication, overall, of the case of Peter is that although he was able to achieve power, prestige and wealth, and enjoy socio-economic mobility, he also lost other important aspects of his self, such as the patriarchal figure who provides for his wife and large family, which he is emotively identified with through the figure of his father.

Similarly, Pierce, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, describes how his career ambitions were “destructive to a lot of other things”:

Pierce (Executive): I had always said that I was either going to be a finance director or I was going to be in a senior position ...[I] had always been ambitious to progress if that makes sense, and that ambition to progress was pretty destructive to a lot of other things... So work life balance was something that I didn't really have in check until about 2009/2010... once I decided I was staying in the profession, I was only going to stay if I was going to be a partner and that was it basically ...I worked really hard, fast, and long, early, late, weekends - but for me it was never about just

being there, you know I worked long hours and I was working long hours, there can be a bit of a culture of being in the office for a long time. I was working bloody hard for long hours, which is why at forty-two I look a bit beaten up and my hair's very grey I suppose. I'm much, much, much more balanced now ...I was pretty unwell, driven by stress and the long hours, my kids were starting to get to an age where they say, 'why aren't you here?' I realised that I didn't want to carry on doing what I was doing.

Pierce had always been ambitious and wanted to reach a senior position in the accountancy profession. He describes how he worked “hard, fast and long, early, late, and weekends” to reach partner level. The account attempts to construct Pierce as a harder worker than his colleagues, as there was “bit of a culture of being in the office for a very long time” but for him “it was never about just being there”. This suggests that others may have also been in the office late, appearing to be working hard, but in ‘reality’, they were not relative to Pierce. However, he explains how his working patterns were “pretty destructive” to other aspects of his life. Pierce describes how he became “pretty unwell, driven by stress”, which he believes was the reason why, despite his relatively young age, he looks “a bit beaten up” and “very grey”. His children had also noticed his extensive working hours, which suggests that his job had put a significant strain on their relationship. Pierce explains that he, ultimately, had to adjust his working pattern, as a result of the adverse implications on his health and his personal inter-relational ties. Earlier on in his account, he had described his very humble beginnings. What emerges from the account given by Pierce is that of a “heroic figure” that works all the hours possible. This could reflect his attempts to construct idealised forms of white, middle class masculinity in light of his working class background. One could argue that accounting and finance, with its professional accreditations and membership, has given those from lower socio-economic backgrounds a clearer route into well-paid, middle class employment.

David, an executive in finance, describes one of the roles he had at an international investment bank:

I moved there for five years on the most ridiculous salary you can imagine ...I had a Bell's Palsy so I lost the use of the right hand side of my face and so I looked like Quasimodo's uglier twin brother, but I was at a conference in Monte Carlo and got s****-faced blind drunk and because I had this Bell's Palsy I couldn't put my lips around the beer so as I was drinking, the alcohol would spill down the front of my shirt but I was boasting about all the things that I'd done in Germany and Ireland and Japan and United States, all over the place, and I had no idea who the guy was opposite me on the table ...he said I want you to come and work for me and I said, in my drunken state, 'you couldn't afford me' and he said 'how much do you want' and so I came up with the biggest number that I could think of and he said 'yes, okay' ...I was just like living in Amsterdam, started off at a 5-star hotel, then a 3-storey mansion, I was just being paid more money every day than I could spend, it was just absolutely ridiculous... I had been living in Amsterdam in this absolute honeypot of an existence, I had a former Dolce & Gabbana model partner and I had a three storey house, a mansion... right in the centre... the nicest part of the city and I had a penthouse in London and I was building a penthouse in Prague and my whole life was set up a hedonism and I was absolutely bored out of my brain.

David vividly describes how one evening he was drunkenly "boasting about all the things" he had done globally with a man he did not know. David was asked by the man to work for him but he responded, "you couldn't afford me" and then "came up with the biggest number" he could think of. David gives an account of his "hedonism" with several luxury properties, a model partner and an "obscene" salary. Later on in his account, David describes why he left this job to set up his own firm:

David (Executive): It was just five years of the most incredible hard work to get this business off the ground, just indescribable

how much hard work it was. Weekdays, weekends, week nights, sometimes no sleep at all, just being an entrepreneur of running a start-up and all the challenges associated with getting that off the ground ...I stared into the abyss; I was on my death bed and I was thinking, looking back on my career, I had become the world's greatest auditor and I just thought, 'oh my god, is that what I really want from my life, to become the world's greatest auditor?' No way, so I knew then that I wanted to do something extraordinary and the job I had then gave me the initial fire power to release myself from having to do 9 to 5 stuff, so that I could go build my launching pad to do something truly extraordinary ...at one stage, for three nights in a row, so four days without sleep, because I was driven by anxiety and I eventually collapsed, I didn't know that you could collapse, I didn't know that you could stay awake for that long without being able to go to sleep; I thought you'd just get tired enough to go to sleep.

David draws on a number of heightened images to symbolise how he pursued his desires and his consequential collapse and hospitalisation. In the first part of the account, for instance, David draws on the image of his "death bed" and "staring into the abyss" which vividly captures his desperate reflection and desire to change his career and move from a lucrative auditing position at a major investment bank, and instead establish his own business, providing financial tools and products to clients. David describes how he gained "the fire power" to release himself from his role at the bank in order to set up something "extraordinary". The heightened imagery drawn on by David evokes the sense of significant pressure building up from within him, of energy exploding out which, in turn, enables him to pursue his desires. This pressure and energy was so profound that he was insomniac for three nights working. David was "driven" so much by anxiety that he collapsed and was hospitalised. The implication of the account given by David is that in order to pursue phallic desires, one must, firstly, narcissistically sell oneself in order to land opportunities and, secondly, surrender any sense of self-control even if it is clearly damaging to one's health or inter-relational ties.

I was intrigued by how few executive and non-executive men had touched upon the harsher realities from their careers. There may be a number of reasons for this. It may be suggested, for instance, that many of the men in the study had not endured much of what executive and non-executive women had experienced at work (*see* Chapters 6 and 7). It is likely, however, that these accounts reflect traditional narratives of masculinity where failure and self-doubt are disavowed as a way to defend traditional forms of masculinity associated with power, strength and control. There is indeed more analysis to be done that is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis, regarding how the men in this study had carefully evaded “vulnerable positions” when giving an account of themselves through, for instance, humour or silences.

However, those few accounts that did explore some of these harsher realities felt particularly tumultuous when compared to the carefully repudiated accounts given by the majority of men. The three cases outlined, for instance, reflect how the pursuit of phallic desires can have adverse implications on the health and inter-relational ties of men. This indicates how men can “have it all” in the finance and accounting sector, but that with this comes significant loss particularly regarding senses of the self. These accounts do not come as any surprise, of course, as the negative effects of the neoliberal workplace are well documented, such as the “bulimic” character of work associated with “projects” (Pratt, 2002), a regular feature of how work was structured in the elite, highly corporate finance and accounting organisations where I conducted interviews, and the “overflow” of this onto the private sphere, particularly on the physical and mental health of employees (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006).

Externalising Masculinity

Many executive and non-executive women in the finance and accounting sector recognized the challenges with working in an environment dominated by men. This section explores two key aspects of the accounts given by women regarding their experiences of working in a highly masculine environment. Firstly, women were able to identify a number of distinctive qualities expressed by men in the workplace including aggression, narcissism and deviousness. In some cases, these qualities were directed *towards* women. Secondly, an “ideological dilemma” emerged for women as, even when they disproved of or distanced themselves from such qualities, they sometimes felt obliged to mimic them in order to ensure they did not fall behind their colleagues. The implication of the accounts was that women indirectly constructed masculine qualities, such as narcissism, aggression and deviousness, as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the neoliberal, “phallic economy”.

Sharon, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, describes how men are often aggressive towards her:

Darren: You mentioned men who may behave aggressively, how do you feel when that happens?

Sharon (Executive): I find it irritating, I find it discourteous; it is discourteous to me whether I am a male or female. I will rebut and I have learnt to just try and walk away from the situation, because if you feed people with their aggression or whatever, they are just going to come back. I am a great believer in you can just keep going on and on, let's close it down. What is really important, and try and deal with it. And if somebody is really dreadful, I would just try not to have anything to do with them, because my belief is that I am right and they are wrong, they are not behaving appropriately. That sounds a bit arrogant, but they are not behaving appropriately. And we do have some

circumstances like that; I'm dealing with a situation at the moment, but I know they are not right in the way they are behaving.

Darren: How do you challenge them or how do you – when someone is being aggressive with you?

Sharon (Executive): I try not to be aggressive back because I don't think that helps anybody. It is trying to take the aggression out of the situation. They feel very aggrieved, reflect back, that this is really concerning to you. How are we going to get this so it is win-win for both of us? ...Try and get the other person to reflect back on themselves. What is going to get this to move forward? Entrenching them in the position isn't.

Sharon finds aggression towards her in the workplace “irritating” and “discourteous”. In the account, she explains her attempts to take “aggression out of the situation” and “close it down” by getting the aggressor to “reflect back on themselves” and understand what is “really concerning” them. If a situation is particularly “dreadful”, Sharon explains that she just “walks away” or has “nothing to do with them”, as she believes that meeting aggression with aggression will only make the aggressor “come back”. The function of the account is two fold: firstly, it constructs aggression as masculine and, secondly, it positions women as responsible for deescalating and containing aggression directed towards them.

Janet, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, also gives an account of a dispute with a colleague in which he became aggressive towards her:

Janet (Non-Executive): As a woman in a senior position you have to come across as quite a strong person, able to make decision ...when you are faced with people that don't necessarily agree with you, be able to have a frank discussion and be able to relay your points across in quite a diplomatic way without being emotional. I really try not to be emotional at work because I feel that women are sometimes portrayed as being emotional and I

think when you are in a senior position you don't want that emotion to come though, that's not to say that at the back of your mind you might be getting emotional, but I personally never show it and I'll always be quite ...business focused ...The team I'm in all the managers are all men apart from one person, so you can get a feel, you are dealing with quite strong personalities, really clever people as well who are high performing, I guess you have to be able to support them in their careers and be looked at as a role model.

The account constructs an idealized image of the masculine worker as distant, rational and controlled. Janet describes her team and workplace as male dominated and associates this with "strong personalities" and 'high performance'. In order to be recognized similarly as "strong" and "business focused", Janet feels compelled to foreclose her emotions even whilst 'at the back of her mind' she might actually be feeling emotional. However, her account of an aggressive interaction with a male colleague contradicts her construction of the idealized worker:

Darren: Can you give me an example or a time when perhaps when you were trying not to be emotional?

Janet (Non-Executive): ...I had an incident with somebody who's left now, we were working with the same manager and he'd allocated work to that manager and so would I and that manager couldn't do both... I felt that he was being quite aggressive with me in front of that manager in terms of why his work should be done and I said 'look, can we take this away into a meeting room?' because it wasn't fair on everybody else to listen to senior people having this conversation in front of other people, so we took it into a meeting room and he was very aggressive and I have to be really, really calm and collective and not rise up to everything that was said to ensure that they sorted it out in that room.

Darren: And how did you feel in that room?

Janet (Non-Executive): Personally, I was thinking 'what an idiot?' he wasn't working with me, he was just one sided, in my head I was thinking 'what an idiot?' ...But, in terms of being frank

with him and ensuring that we resolve the situation I was not going to show my feelings to him because we wouldn't have achieved anything, I had to be the bigger person and rise above maybe the slight anger that I had.

The aggressive encounter with her male colleague ensued openly on the office floor, which she subsequently had to usher into a private meeting room. Janet recounts how her colleague continued to be confrontational and defensive, “one sided”, in the room and how she endeavored to remain “calm and collective”, “the bigger person” and ‘rise above’ any anger that was evoked in her during the hostile encounter. The function of the account given by Janet is two-fold: firstly, it constructs the masculine worker as diplomatic, unemotional and controlled, and as the optimum position to which women ought to aspire, as they are at risk of expressing contrary, ‘unprofessional’ qualities, such as emotion; secondly, however, the construction of the idealised masculine worker appears to contradict her account of her male colleagues who she describes as having, for instance, “strong personalities”, as well as her encounter with her aggressive and defensive male colleague. This account raises interesting questions regarding the role of such constructions. Does, for instance, the construction of the idealised worker as, for example, controlled and unemotional, quell emotion in women, as this may prompt them towards resistance and challenge, for instance, during hostile encounters with male colleagues?

The second set of accounts by executive and non-executive women construct men as highly competitive, narcissistic and Machiavellian, and how these qualities are a necessary currency to success in the workplace. Jane, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, describes how men are better at getting what they want in her organisation:

Jane (Non-Executive): they've [men] got so much self-confidence ...they get to their late 20s and they think, 'I want to

earn loads of money, how do I do it?' I'm just going to push and push and push and if I don't get it here, I'll go somewhere else and push and push and push. They've just got this single minded sort of ambition ...be it money driven, be it title driven... ...they were the sort of people who they get a promotion, they get told, 'well done, you've been promoted, this is what you're going to be paid' and straight away they storm out of that meeting and say 'it's not good enough'. And you know they have the confidence to do that because they thought that they were entitled to more ...all credit to them it usually worked for them ...we have our annual bonus and salary conversations, regardless of whether I'm pleased or not, I used to go 'brilliant that's great, thank you' whatever it was and nowadays I'll just be much more poker face, take it away and think about it and then go back and 'is there any more available?' But it doesn't feel natural ...it feels really weird when someone's saying, 'I want to give you a pay rise and I want to give you a bonus of this', to sit there and be ungrateful about it because really you want to say 'thanks, that's really great, I'm really pleased with that' ...But I know that my peers ...they're doing so you think well I have to do it as well otherwise I'm going to fall behind.

Jane explains that men have the 'self-confidence' and sense of entitlement to "push and push and push" and "storm out of" meetings, as strategies for securing promotions and improved financial remuneration in the workplace. The account constructs men as demanding and aggressively externalising their demands in the pursuit of their desires. Although Jane describes how she used to be grateful when she received a promotion or bonus, she is, however, much more "poker face" now in promotion and remuneration meetings. Despite it making her feel uncomfortable, she explains that peers are demanding more and how she, therefore, attempts to parody these behaviours, as she is concerned with "falling behind" others. The account has two primary functions. Firstly, the account constructs aggressive individualism, demanding more and egocentric qualities as an essential currency for success within the phallic economy. Secondly, a sense of lack emerges from the account in which the subject appears to blame oneself for failing to mimic authentically such phallic qualities, as Jane suggests, "all credit to them it usually worked for them".

Sarah, similarly, gives an account of the pervasiveness of individualism and deviousness in her organisation:

Sarah (Executive): I think certain individuals probably master the art of getting recognition perhaps a little bit better, perhaps I don't really invest as much time into thinking about that as others ...I think they probably dedicate more time to it, think more about who they should be telling about their successes, I think they probably pick projects, initiatives and things to do that they believe will get them better publicity internally, within an organisation. I think on perhaps a more negative note, they sometimes claim credit, for things that perhaps they haven't been particularly heavily involved in. I think they're probably a bit more politically savvy, so thinking very carefully about how and who and the timing of how they communicate their successes, so I guess I feel as though I'm savvy enough to recognise that that's one of my failings but I also feel as though it would be not true to who I am to become more like the people that I see that claim more credit or get broader recognition for their contribution and I also, and maybe this is a bit naïve, but I also have faith that individuals within the organisation will, at some time, recognise contribution of people who are perhaps not always so vocal about it. But maybe that's a naïve faith.

Sarah is an executive in a male-dominated, multi-national investment bank. She constructs 'others' in her organisation as "masters" and "politically savvy" in gaining recognition for their successes, and even 'claiming more credit' for their contribution than they deserve. Although Sarah explains that assuming this position would not reflect her character, she however constructs this as her own "failure". The account, therefore, has two functions. Firstly, the account constructs deviousness and narcissism as important qualities required for success and career progression in the finance and accounting sector. Secondly, similar to the account given by Jane, the account by Sarah appears to turn towards self-recrimination for failing to embody authentically such phallic qualities.

Similar the accounts given by Jane and Sarah, Deborah, similarly, gives an account of the Machiavellian culture at her organisation:

Darren: And you mentioned the words moral and ethical, I think, can you tell me a little bit more about what they mean?

Deborah (Executive): Yeah, it's about doing business the right way and the long term way, without cutting corners, without overstating, you know ...transparency has been super important, because these are long term commitments ... investments that you make ...relationships with the clients ...your colleagues around the table, and that's really important, the integrity ...At the same time, the downfall is you may not be as Machiavellian and clever, and you've seen those people get ahead ...a certain amount of that behaviour I do respect because it takes a lot of thought and it's quite clever to think about jump, jump, jump...

Deborah explains that “integrity” with regards to “long term relationships”, investments, clients and colleagues, and not “cutting corners” are important to her in order to do “business the right way”. However, contrarily, Deborah associates attributes such as ‘cleverness’ with qualities such as deviousness and narcissism with regards to the pursuit of one’s own interests at the expense of others in the workplace. However, similar to both Jane and Sarah, Deborah appears to individualise her relative lack of career progression and success as her inability to be “Machiavellian and clever” and, therefore, “jump, jump, jump” and “get ahead” in the workplace. The account, thus, constructs the attributes required for success as deviousness and the aggressive externalisation of the self, and how she rationalises her relative lack of success as a deficit of these qualities.

Both executive and non-executive women in the finance and accounting sector recognised the challenges associated with working in an environment

dominated by men. This indicates a shared experience of gender by the women. The chapter has identified two important aspects to the accounts given by women in this regard. Firstly, women identified a number of qualities expressed by men in gaining success. These included: narcissism, for instance, how men egocentrically focused on how they could advance their own interests at work; aggression, particularly when making demands regarding remuneration and promotions; and deviousness, for instance, in taking credit for work that they did not contribute to or persuading others in a calculated way at work. The implication of these accounts was that women indirectly constructed challenges associated with masculinity as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the “phallic economy”. Secondly, although the accounts given by Sarah, Deborah and Jane attempted to create distance from the aforementioned qualities, they simultaneously gave an undistorted account of these phallic frames of success and, in some cases, attempted to mimic these qualities in order to keep up with their colleagues. Moreover, some of the accounts individualised the inability of women to mimic authentically such qualities, which pointed towards a sense of self-recrimination in which women constructed themselves as ‘under-performing’ or ‘failing’. The implication of this process is that it distracts women from a phallic economy in which qualities associated with femininity have little value or worth.

Confidence Repertoires

Many executive and non-executive women drew on interpretative repertoires concerning confidence. However, men rarely drew on such ideas. Therefore, confidence repertoires were highly distinctive as of their gendered use and address to women. This discursive formation has become almost contagious particularly in the workplace with the emergence of self-help guides, such as *Lean In* by Sandberg (2013) and the *The Confidence Code* by Kay and Shipman (2014), where female confidence at work forms their central argument. Gill and Orgad (2015) argue that confidence is a

discourse consisting of knowledge, apparatuses and incitements that come together to constitute a technology of the self and shape new subjectivities. Although confidence has become synonymous with positive ideas, as an obvious ‘good’, Gill and Orgad (2015) argue that these tropes work to individualise and blame women for broader discriminatory processes. The “Confidence Repertoires” drawn on by executive and non-executive women in this section reflect this individualising thrust. This section extends the conclusions by Gill and Orgad (2015) through the exploration of how these discursive formations are employed and embodied by women in the finance and accounting sector.

One interpretative repertoire drawn on by executive and non-executive women constructed confidence as *psychic material*, located within a stable, internal space within the subject, that could be drawn on to improve oneself in response to external demands. Cara, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, explains confidence as something that emerges internally:

Cara (Non-Executive): I have learned how sort of, confident I am in sort of my own sense of myself and values and things that probably has enabled me to get sort of where I am ...one of the things that I thought I needed to improve on was confidence because women have to come up, or men everyone has to come across as confident and I could never quite get what that really meant. But I’ve learned that I have like this inner sort of base which does allow me, although not seeming to be like completely over confident, to be quite bold and things because I’m quite sort of grounded in who I think I am where my values are and a lot of my values sort of come from ...being a mixed race family, probably dad with no education.

Cara explains that she felt she needed to improve her confidence, as there was much ‘talk’ of it at work and how she had noticed the confidence of others. Cara explains how she learnt about an “inner sort of base”, where her values come from, defined in part by her family history, and how this

enabled her to be confident. The function of the interpretative repertoire is, firstly, to locate confidence within an internal, stable psychic space *within* the self and, secondly, conceptualise confidence as unique psychic material from which the subject can draw on to ‘be’ or “come across as confident”. The implication of the interpretative repertoire is to individualise extra-psychic demands in the workplace and interpellate the subject *to turn in on* the self as a way to work *on the self* in response to demands in the workplace.

Jane, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, similarly draws on individualising tropes of confidence and associates this with success and leadership practices at work:

Darren: ...what are some of these leadership qualities?

Jane (Non-Executive): ...people who can manage people well, people who are clearly very confident in their own abilities ...I think there’s always something about the people who progress and sometimes it’s easy to point to it and sometimes it’s not but I think more than anything it is a sort of self-confidence, self-belief and the fact that people believe in you because of the way you are, if that makes sense?

Jane explains that those who progress and practice leadership qualities in the workplace have “self-belief” and confidence in their own “abilities”, as well as the belief of others. The interpretative repertoire constructs confidence as a mode of self-regulation required to be successful in the workplace. One potential implication of confidence as a form of regulation is that it may work to interpellate women to ‘scratch’ their subjectivities for reasons why perhaps they have been less successful than others at work, rather than questioning the demands and inequalities emerging from within the phallic economy.

Some of the executive and non-executive women drew on interpretative repertoires that constructed an illusion of dependency and self-autonomy at work. Flora, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, describes confidence as not requiring the recognition of others:

Darren: What does confidence look like then to you?

Flora (Non-Executive): ...outwardly, actually that you feel that you're good in what you do in every interaction that you have. I think if you can walk into any room and sort of go 'I am who I am and I know I'm good at what I do and I don't need anybody to affirm that for me because I just know I am', I think that is confidence. I think if you walk into a room and you're always slightly nervous about whether you'll be good enough or whether you'll be found out or anything like that, I think that's when obviously there's an issue around confidence.

Flora explains confidence as 'knowing oneself' and one's value without the affirmation of others, whilst paradoxically suggesting that it exists "outwardly", and can be identified by others when it is lacking. However, Flora does not provide a critique of *why* one would feel nervous or lack confidence at work. The function of the interpretative repertoire is two-fold. Firstly, the repertoire repudiates senses of insecurity or vulnerability and renders them undesirable, without distorting what is evoking them. The implication of the repertoire is, therefore, to deflect attention from processes of discrimination by individualising the affects that it evokes, and constructing them as originating from *within* the subject. Secondly, the repertoire constructs the illusion of detachment from others, which supports the construction of individualistic and defensive subjectivities.

Some of the executive and non-executive women drew on Confidence Repertoires that were littered with phrasal verbs that evoked heightened

images associated with bodily acts in the pursuit of one's desires. Vanessa, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, describes confidence as 'pushing' oneself harder and 'beyond one's comfort zone':

Vanessa (Non-Executive): [a manager] pushed me a bit harder, so instead of me poking my toe outside of my comfort zone, he has made me take two feet and jump outside of my comfort zone. I think you need someone to encourage you to do that, even the most confident and the boldest people, I still think there is a comfort zone level and actually, it can often take someone else to really encourage you to see how far you are willing to go, to push yourself ...He would know what I want and encourage me to go for it. Never told me there was a limit there.

The function of the repertoire is to symbolise subjectivity as a malleable instrument that can "jump outside" of what it recognises and be "pushed". The implication of the repertoire is that, to be recognized as confident, the subject is expected to *extend* or *discharge* itself in order to access opportunities and achieve success at work.

Whereas the aforementioned tropes constructed confidence as an internal psychic material that could be drawn on to improve the self, some women, contradictorily, constructed confidence as a resource that could be effortlessly incorporated *into* the self. Sharon, an executive at a mid-tier firm, describes how she has acquired the skills to be confident:

Sharon (Executive): I think that you can learn to be confident and new skills to be confident because deep inside, I am still that very introverted person that was at school, and if you put me in a group with those same school people, like a school reunion, I would revert in time. However, I think and somebody who worked for me once said, I was okay, because I was an extrovert and I said, 'I am not extrovert, I am a skilled introvert'. And I think that is what

very many people are. You learn the skills. But you don't always get it right, you get it wrong, okay, move on.

Sharon explains that one can learn to be confident and describes how she is a “skilled introvert”, as she is introverted but can also be extrovert in response to external demands. The interpretative repertoire constructs confidence as, firstly, something that can be developed internally within the self and, secondly, as an internal shortage that can be plugged through the installation of certain new “skills” from outside the self. However, even when one has installed these ‘new skills’, Sharon suggests that sometimes these can fail and one can “get it wrong” but insists that one must “move on”.

Kim, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, constructs confidence as something that she accumulated during the course of her career:

Kim (Executive): I worked ...with a manager who I couldn't do anything right for, I still remember him ...he didn't explain what he wanted and ...everything was always wrong and you get into a bit of a downwards spiral. But when I moved to Manchester, I worked a lot with a lady manager there and ...everything seemed to go well ...as your self-confidence builds it's quite interesting because it is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy almost in a way ...I think you can get yourself into spirals. So that for me was one of the turning points because I actually sort of started to believe I was good at this and I could do this... And then moving to that smaller firm again was good because I was given that free reign to go and do different things and I was given that responsibility and trust and empowered to get on with things which again starts to build your confidence ...when I came to this firm there were two tax partners ...those were very different characters but both of them really input into my self-belief, my development, really encouraged me ...because I got promoted within three years of joining ...thirty-one or something like that, so relatively young ... I'd say they were really crucial in terms of helping me ...not formally coached me because you probably don't have coaching in the way that we

do these days, but spent a lot of time with me and helped to build my sort of confidence and belief in myself that I could do this sort of thing.

Kim explains that when she started out in her career, she had a challenging male manager with whom “everything was always wrong”, and consequently, she describes how she went into a “downward spiral”. When she moved to Manchester, however, she worked with a “lady manager” where “everything seemed to go well”. The interpretative repertoire here appears to construct indirectly the difference between the two managers in gendered ways. Kim describes how her later relationships with two partners in her current firm gave her the responsibility and trust they she required to “build” her confidence further. The function of the interpretative repertoire is to construct confidence as an attribute that one seamlessly accumulates over time. Even when there are clear breaks in the account given, for instance, when one’s confidence is damaged due to a difficult relationship with a superior, confidence is however regained.

Conversely, Julie, an executive in a large investment bank, defines having confidence as accepting one’s ‘imperfections’:

Julie (Executive): ...I think the issue about not having the confidence is that actually nobody is ever 100% right or perfect the whole time, and actually you need to be confident that you’re good enough because if you do doubt your own abilities everybody else will doubt it even more, and everybody just throws back actually what you tend to give off. So people who look confident and know what they’re doing, are successful because everybody else thinks, ‘well, that must be right’, nobody is actually running any form of detailed diagnostics to check whether that person’s confidence is merited or not.

Julie explains that if one is confident than one recognizes and accepts that they are never “100% right”. The implication of this is that ‘perfectionism;

is constructed as the ‘enemy’ to confidence. Confidence is, thus, constructed as a reflexive reaction to internal wounds, which are positioned as self-inflicted, and obstructive to the accomplishment of workplace desires. However, somewhat paradoxically, Julie also explains that one must be confident as when one doubts oneself, this is ‘given off’ and others will doubt and have less confidence in that person. Thus, the implication of the repertoire is that paradoxically self-confidence *depends on* the confidence of others.

What is most striking about “Confidence Repertoires” is their gendered address and use by women. Neither executive nor non-executive men touched upon the idea of confidence either in relation to themselves or others. However, both executive and non-executive women drew on notions of confidence in the aforementioned ways. The implication of these repertoires was two-fold: firstly, to construct confidence as associated with qualities such as narcissism, defensiveness and aggression; and secondly, to construct women as struggling with the expression of these qualities and, therefore, possessing a “confidence deficit”. The intent of these discourses was to individualise and blame women for broader, gender discriminatory processes.

Self-Recrimination and Self-Pleasure

In the last section, I explored the psycho-discursive dynamics of “Confidence Repertoires”, their individualising thrust, and their implication with regards to the construction of women as possessing a “confidence deficit”. In this section, I explore how the individualising force of confidence repertoires trigger a pernicious psycho-discursive in which women self-recriminate for the inexpression of qualities associated with confidence such as, for instance, narcissism, defensiveness and aggression. Executive women also played a pivotal role in shaping this discursive

reality by drawing on interpretative repertoires that explicitly positioned other women, particularly less senior women, as in need of confidence and, thus, development.

What I found most striking about many of the accounts given by non-executive women was their concern with self-development such as gaining new experiences, skills and credibility with colleagues. This was in stark contrast to both executive and non-executive men who held clearly defined “phallic desires”, regarding improving their remuneration or power through promotion, as explored in first section of this chapter. In some cases, even when non-executive women expressed phallic desires earlier on in their career, these desires appeared to change over time, as pleasure was alternatively sought in self-development and recognition rather than in power, prestige and wealth. This section raises the idea that this position may indirectly be the outcome of a discursive reality in which women are constructed as possessing a confidence deficit and in need of development.

After observing how men achieve better pay in the financial sector, Lauren, an executive at a large investment bank, laments how she wished she had reacted when she felt her career and pay had stagnated:

Lauren (Executive): I think that I have always tried to do the right thing and be the kind of person that gets on with stuff and delivers, but I think, sometimes, actually, I needed the confidence to be the person that was disruptive, that complained, that said, ‘what the hell’s going on!’ I think I needed to be more of a person that challenges rather than is just getting on with things. So if I think of all the things that have been difficult or distressing, it’s been because I knew the situation around me wasn’t right, but I didn’t really have the guts to go and say, ‘I’m not happy with this’. That kind of inner strength to just go and have a fight with somebody about it, to say, ‘I don’t understand my role’ ...That’s been my problem I think, the unwillingness to just go and ...say, ‘this is not right, I’m not happy, you know, I don’t know how to

be successful here' ...if I'd had that earlier on in my career, things would have been different, because, one, people would probably have respected me more, so that being a part of the furniture wouldn't have happened, but also I would have unpicked some things sooner, yeah, I think that's probably the thing, that bit about go and challenge and stand up for yourself and say, 'this isn't right' ...So I just don't think I realised that that is part of the working world, that you can do it. I think I always thought you just had to be strong and push through and try and work it out yourself, rather than going to challenge, and I think, certainly, more latterly, I now would go in and say, 'not happy with that' ...I've certainly realised that sometimes you have to go in and, you have to go in and shout, because you sometimes do see around you lots of people who are quite, you know, critical and shouting about things, and they get stuff, they get stuff even if they don't necessarily deserve it, because people just want to shut them up, which is quite interesting really, and a bit annoying.

Lauren wishes that she had had the confidence and “inner strength” to be “disruptive”, “to stand up for” herself, “to challenge”, “to go in and shout”, and “to have a fight with someone” regarding her discontentment at work. She substantiates this by drawing on the example of other colleagues who are “critical and shouting about things” and who “get stuff even if they don't necessarily deserve it”. Lauren explains that if she had mimicked these behaviours, she may have improved her remuneration, success and others would have “respected” her more for it. The function of the interpretative repertoire is two-fold: firstly, to berate the self for external deficits, for instance, for a lack of support, recognition or clarity in one's role; and, secondly, to construct respect and success as attained through the imposition or discharge of the self *on* others through ‘disruption’, ‘shouting’ and ‘fighting’.

Jade, for instance, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, describes how confidence has held her back at work:

Jade (Non-Executive): I think on reflection if I look back I've held myself back ...having that mentality about my career rather than going in on day one and I'm going to be a partner, then I've probably held myself back. So people have come up faster than me in the profession because they've put themselves out there and they've pushed themselves and they've had self-confidence to go and push themselves forward ...I think I've always struggled with my confidence ...I've always said to myself, 'I can't do that', or 'that's too difficult' and I've been scared of - and it's not because I've thought it's too difficult or because I've been lazy because I think I've got a really strong work ethic and I've got a really strong quality ethic - but it's because I've been probably too much bothered about what people think of me rather than no, I will achieve and I know I'll do well. It's that confidence piece; I've always struggled with that confidence piece I think ...what I'm saying is I've never pushed myself to get all my potential out, I've been a bit of a Steady Eddie in my career I think. And where I have doubted myself, I've let that take control and I've let that govern what I do and sat back really in terms of boosting myself along my career.

Jade associates 'holding herself back' in her career with a lack of confidence. She rationalises this with the following thoughts, "I can't do that", "that's too difficult" or being "scared of" opportunities that came her way. However, the interpretative repertoire is highly contradictory, as Jade simultaneously explains that her lack of confidence was not that she thought "it's too difficult" or that she's "lazy", affirming that she has "got a really strong work ethic", but that she has been too preoccupied by what others thought of her. However, she fails to elaborate on *what* others may have thought of her and whether this was discriminatory. Jade draws on heightened imagery to explain how she has, instead, "sat *back*" and did not push herself to "get all her potential *out*", whilst colleagues who have been more successful in their careers have "put themselves *out there*" and pushed "themselves *forward*". This contrast between 'pushing oneself forward' or 'sitting back' in one's career resonates with the active and passive dichotomy associated with masculinity and femininity. The implication of such heightened imagery is that success is associated with *extending* and locating oneself *outside* the self and recriminate the self for not expressing

these qualities. The overall function of the repertoire is to individualise failures or one's lack of success in relation to others at work.

Similarly, Deidre, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, explains how her lack of self-confidence has adversely impacted her career:

Deidre (Executive): The only person that holds me back is myself I would say ...what I've come to notice in work over years is that men generally want to jump in and do the role above two years before and women want to do it two years after when they're comfortable can actually do it, and I think that's probably true for me, I've always wanted to be there before I then made that commitment to do it. So, I've probably been, the thing that's held back, in the sense that it's confidence, whether I should have done it six years ago, which is probably true, and actually if I had done it six years ago I might be further than I am now, it's a balancing act of being able to commit to it when you have other things in your life as well.

Deidre appears to berate herself for wanting to "be there" in a role before committing to it. Conversely, she explains how men want "to jump in and do the role" before they are ready. Deidre laments how her inability to do this has "held back" her career progression. The interpretative repertoire has two functions: firstly, it individualises or blames the self for one's lack of success, and does not provide a more rounded rationalisation for this, including a critique of her organisation's culture or structure; secondly, the interpretive repertoire constructs qualities such as reflexivity, deliberation and pragmatism, as the antithesis of confidence and obstructive to career success in the accounting and finance sector. Moreover, the repertoire could indicate an anxiety regarding exposing oneself to unfair or disproportionate criticism from others upon the assumption of a new role with greater responsibility and visibility.

Some executive women drew on interpretative repertoires that constructed other women as in need of more confidence at work. The function of the accounts was, firstly, to mediate the persecution of women who did not express qualities associated with confidence, such as defensiveness, aggression and narcissism and, secondly, concretise the discursive reality that women suffer from a confidence deficit and, therefore, require self-improvement and help. Julie, an executive at an investment bank, rationalises any sense of exclusion by women as a confidence deficit:

Julie (Executive): I think some things come back to confidence and the overriding thing I think is that women tend not to be as confident about their ability or how they're regarded ...but men actually are pretty fundamentally confident that they're here, they're doing a good job and they're fine, so they don't necessarily feel left out because if you're confident about yourself and what you're doing then you don't perceive it as being left out you just see it possibly as not being relevant for you to be involved. So it's all about perception of a situation.

Darren: When you say confident what does that ... can you define that for me?

Julie (Executive): Well, I think confidence is about being secure in your own abilities and being comfortable ...in who you are.

Julie explains that women sometimes feel left out as they lack confidence regarding their abilities to perform a role, and are concerned with recognition from others. Julie also affirms that men are "fundamentally confident" as "they're here", "they're a doing a good job" and "they're fine". The function of the account is two-fold: firstly, it presents an undistorted view of men as the embodiment of confidence in the workplace. The implication of this is that qualities, such as defensiveness, "fundamentally confident", and imposition, "they're here", are constructed as stable and optimum psychic states in the workplace. In addition, it also constructs confidence as a quality innate within men. Secondly, it repudiates the abjection of women by constructing it as the result of a lack of

confidence, which overall works to individualise gender discrimination in the workplace.

Similarly, Sharon, explains that women lack confidence and she now supports them through ‘coaching’:

Sharon (Executive): I was not necessarily very good at shouting about me and what I did. I have heard about the Princess Syndrome - I don’t know if you have heard about that?

Darren: No, there are lots of these syndromes...

Sharon (Executive): ...men are much more likely to go out and say, ‘look at me’, ‘look how great I am’, whereas women are more likely to sit in the corner and ask for the crown to be put on their head ...[women] totally as capable as men but not ...shouting about it, hence Princess Syndrome with the crown ... [a coach] challenged me all the time and I have since qualified as a coach ...[the coach] gave me the confidence to say, well, ‘why shouldn’t I do that?’ ‘And what about that’, and ‘I had not looked at it that way’, ‘let’s think about that’. I have found particularly as I have coached or mentored women more than men, that I have seen that in them, well, ‘I can’t do that because I have not got a babysitter’ and ‘I can’t do that because it means staying after work’. ‘Well, okay, what can you do?’ ‘And what can you make work’, and if you look at the men they were also going off to parent’s evenings or whatever, they make it work. ‘How are you going to make it work for you, and I think we are pretty good at doing that?’

Sharon commences the account by discussing how she “was not very good at shouting about” herself at work until she underwent coaching. She explains that men in comparison “go out” and shout, “look at me”, “how great am I?” The implication of this is that it normalises a narcissistic position in which subjects discharge grandiose fantasies of themselves as a strategy for success at work. Sharon draws on the analogy of a “princess” to symbolise how women instead “sit in the corner” expecting recognition and

for “the crown to put on their head”. The function of this heightened image is, firstly, to construct women as ‘attention seekers’ and demanding in the workplace; secondly, it constructs an undistorted view of men as hard working and organised in comparison to women, as even they are “going off to parent’s evenings” and, thus, more deserving of praise and reward.

Florence, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, explains how she tries to help women to be more confident in the workplace:

Florence (Executive): I don’t really like being told no. I always need to understand why I can’t do something ...I’ve thought through what I want to do and why it’s right for the business, I can generally convince people to let me go and do what I want to do ...I think it’s just trying to kind of get people to feel the same, to believe in what they believe in, to trust their judgement and if they want something and they think it’s right for the business and for them to just keep on knocking on doors and finding the right people to talk to, to make it happen; to not give up the first time you’re told ‘no’ but to kind of come back and think about it ...but ...trying to get people to understand what they’re passionate about, what difference they want to make and why, and then just to sell it, to sell the vision because if people see you’ve got passion for something they’re more likely to go along with it and just not to take no for an answer. Be brave, be brave ...again with women there’s that whole thing isn’t there that they say that if a job has got ten attributes and a woman’s got nine then she won’t go for it but if a man’s got three or four then he’ll go for it anyway and I see that in the business constantly ...trying to get people, particularly women to understand that that’s just the way that a lot of us are, you just need to put that to one side and just go on otherwise you miss opportunities ...anything I can do to help, particularly women or men who are less confident, to put themselves forward for things and back themselves. You know, it’s only accountancy, nobody’s going to die if you get it wrong.

Florence begins by rationalising her success as having “thought through” what she wants and “why it’s right for the business”, and convincing others

of her vision. She explains how she always attempts to persuade others to “feel the same”, “to keep on knocking on doors”, “to not give up”, “to sell it” and “to back themselves” until others “go along with it”. Florence also constructs an undistorted view of men as instinctually confident, as she explains they “go for it [opportunities] anyway”. Women, she asserts, must “put that [doubts, thoughts, or feelings] to one side” and, instead, “put themselves forward” and “back themselves”. The function is to construct women as having a confidence deficit but that this is a challenge emerging from *within* them. The implication of this confidence repertoire is to discourage qualities such as reflexivity, as men “go for it anyway”, and construct other qualities as desirable in the workplace, such as defensiveness, “to back themselves”, and the externalisation and imposition of one’s vision through persuasion and self-marketing.

In comparison to the uncontrollable phallic desires of men explored in the first section of the chapter, many non-executive women, in particular, appeared to find pleasure, not in promotion and pay, but in developing their skills and experiences and gaining credibility with others at work. In some cases, even when non-executive women expressed phallic desires earlier on in their career, these desires appeared to change over time, as pleasure was sought in self-development and recognition. Vanessa, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, explains how her idea of success had changed from when she had started out in her career:

Vanessa (Non-Executive): Very definitely, it was making Partner. For me success was about progression ...being Partner essentially is the – in my head at the time was being top of the pile, if you like. You get up to the top of that ladder and you have worked to get there really and it was that being able to be proud of that pathway you go along really.

Darren: Has your definition of success changed?

Vanessa (Non-Executive): Yes [Laughter]. Most definitely ...Partner probably is not quite what I think a Partner really is now. Perhaps it never was, but actually what I know now is

actually that path to success is not necessarily about a title anymore. It makes a difference clearly, but it is not about a title anymore. Actually, I am kind of growing and learning more ... it is amazing how much of my time over the years I have spent expanding my knowledge in a given area, and my skills, whether that is softer skills or technical skills ... I never realised I had that same thirst for that angle of the role. To me now, success does have a lot to do with feeling very credible in the role I do. That is very, very important to me, that it is not about me believing about the role, that I am successful in my role, it is about others looking at me and thinking she is successful in her role ... You have a lot more responsibilities now both just from a career perspective job but also from a personal perspective.

The objective of Vanessa when she started out on her career was to become a partner. However, she explains that partnership is ‘not what she thinks it is now’ and success is “not necessarily about a title anymore”. Vanessa is now more concerned with “expanding [her] knowledge” and “softer... and technical skills”. Success is, instead, about “growing and learning” and “feeling very credible in the role”, and the recognition of this by others. Whereas pleasure was once sought in phallic desires, in terms of making partnership, it now concerns expanding and developing the self, and in doing so, gaining the recognition of others. However, there are contradictory aspects to the interpretative repertoire, particularly, where Vanessa explains “the path to success is not necessarily about a title anymore” whilst stating that “it makes a difference clearly”.

Similarly, Janet, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, explains how her idea of career success has changed over time:

Janet (Non-Executive): ...I think initially I guess I was probably a bit short sighted in that I just wanted to be promoted, get to the next level; money also played a part because when the promotion comes the salary rise. I guess that’s changed now slightly because now I’m more focused in adding value to not only myself but my team as well and helping them grow and develop. When I see

other people get promoted within the team that brings me job satisfaction in my own role, so it's changed in that sense.

Janet explains how success earlier on in her career concerned ascending the organisational hierarchy and increasing her salary. However, she is now more focused on “adding value to not only herself” but also to her team, and “helping them grow and develop”. The implication of this account is that the object of desire has shifted from promotion and salary and now concerns developing the self and others.

Catrina, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, similarly describes how her idea of success has changed over time:

Catrina (Non-Executive): I think when I first started my career in terms of what I was thinking about the future ... you start to think, well, success is getting a good year end appraisal for example and you know, ultimately getting promoted, getting paid more sort of working your way up the career ladder. I mean I think I still feel that to a certain extent; there is an element of do I feel successful by getting the promotion that I got in February, yeah of course I do and that's obviously still at the front of your mind and you think about your career ... or I think about my career progression potentially up to partner and you know, you look at the CEO, and think that is success. I think I probably think about it a lot more granularly now so in the sense of you know ...I'll think that I've been successful if the team have been a bit unhappy and I've helped them to feel more positive about their work. Or you know, improving the finances or various other kinds of sub things within that, that sort of make me think, 'yeah, that's been a success' and therefore I feel successful for having done it.

Success for Katrina was initially about “getting promoted”, “getting paid more” and climbing the “career ladder”. However, she now considers success much more “granularly” in terms of supporting her team or

improving aspects of her role, such as financial processes. However, this desire is not completely lost to the self as Catrina remarks how to some extent making promotion and reaching senior level positions still feels like success.

The main focus of this section has been on the relationship between “Confidence Repertoires” and the psycho-discursive process of self-recrimination in which women berate themselves for the inexpression of qualities associated with confidence in the workplace, such as narcissism, defensiveness and aggression. Moreover, the section has shown how this psycho-discursive ‘reality’ was further enforced by executive women who drew on discursive repertoires that positioned other women as in need of confidence. The implication of this was that executive women positioned themselves as having ‘attained’ confidence and, therefore, somehow responsible for supporting other women to develop confidence. However, neither executive nor non-executive women provided a distorted view of confidence and were unaware that they were perpetuating the abjection of feminine qualities disassociated with confidence.

What was most curious about many of the accounts given by, in particular, non-executive women, was their concern with gaining skills and experiences rather than power and wealth. This contrasted sharply with the desires held by the majority of both executive and non-executive men, outlined in the opening section of this chapter. Even when non-executive women had held “phallic desires” similar to men, they often appeared to change over time towards non-phallic frames, such as gaining the right skills and the credibility of others.

Discussion: The Confidence Paradox

This central aim of this chapter has been to show how confidence is constructed inter-relationally between men and women in the finance and accounting sector. In the first section, it was argued that men held clearly defined “phallic desires” regarding making promotion and improving their remuneration. It was shown that the majority of men rarely touched on the harsher realities from their careers. This was curious when compared to the narratives of women who brought up “vulnerable” moments more frequently than men (*see* Chapter 7). This could reflect the attempt by men to disavow failure and self-doubt as a way to defend traditional forms of masculinity associated with power, strength and control. However, on those rare occasions when men did open up, the accounts given shed considerable light on the tumultuous journeys ventured by them in the pursuit of their desires and, moreover, the adverse implications that, for instance, extensive and intensive work, and geographical mobility, had on their well-being and important inter-relational ties. The implication of this is that men can indeed “have it all” in the finance and accounting sector, but that they do not appear to realise the potentially adverse effects that pursuing the phallus can have on either themselves or others until it is too late. This represents men as mercifully “opening” themselves psychically to the neoliberal phallus. Psychoanalytical scholars, such as Jessica Benjamin (2004), may suggest that the cases explored in the first section of the chapter, in which men pursued their desires to the their own detriment, represent how men had little ownership or control over their desires, and the implications of them on either themselves or others.

The second section of the chapter explored how executive and non-executive women discursively constructed men in the workplace. Women constructed men as challenging and associated them with qualities such as

aggression, narcissism and deviousness. In some cases, these qualities were constructed as *directed* towards or against women. Psychoanalytical scholars may conceptualise this as “phallic discharge” in which masculinity is “externalized”, actively shaping and potentially damaging inter-relational ties. An “ideological dilemma” appears to emerge in the accounts given by women as, on the one hand, they disproved of or distanced themselves discursively from the aforementioned qualities whilst, on the other hand, they felt that they had to mimic them in order to keep up with colleagues in terms of promotion and remuneration. The implication of this is that women indirectly constructed qualities associated with masculinity as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the “phallic economy”. Qualities disassociated with confidence such as deliberation, pragmatism, self-doubt and reflexivity, qualities, some may argue, stereotypically associated with femininity, were repudiated as having little capital or value within the phallic economy.

A central component of the accounts given by women were “Confidence Repertoires”. Confidence repertoires were, therefore, highly distinctive due to their gendered use and address to women. The implication of these repertoires was two-fold. Firstly, they constructed confidence as associated with qualities such as narcissism, defensiveness and aggression. Secondly, they constructed women as lacking confidence and, thus, positioned women in a “confidence deficit”. Confidence is constructed as empowering and as something that one can fix. “Confidence Repertoires”, therefore, had a pernicious force of individualizing and blaming women for broader discriminatory processes as the result the “confidence deficit” of women. This individualising thrust resonates with the work of Gill and Orgad (2015) who examine broader discourses in popular self-guide guides, where women’s confidence forms a central component to their argument.

The implication of this individualising thrust was that it appeared to trigger a psycho-discursive dynamic in which women self-berated for the

inexpression of qualities associated with confidence, such as narcissism, defensiveness and aggression. This was also enforced, in part, by executive women who positioned other women, particularly less successful women, as in need of confidence. The implication of this construction was that executive women positioned themselves as having attained confidence. Neither executive nor non-executive women provided a distorted view of confidence and were unaware that they were perpetuating the abjection of feminine qualities disassociated with confidence. Psychoanalytically inflected scholars may explain this recriminatory dynamic through the idea of a “female persecutory figure” which appears in the imaginations of women and berates them for expressing qualities disassociated with confidence that align with stereotypical forms of femininity, such as reflexivity, self-deliberation and pragmatism. These qualities are constructed as having very little human capital within the phallic economy.

McRobbie (2015) argues that inner-directed self-competitiveness and beratement of women emerges from being not “good enough or perfect enough” (p.17). Masculine dominance is ensured through a perfection *dispositif* or discursive symbol in which women are expected to self-regulate and monitor themselves. This represents a “(re)packing of competition”, as inequality is masked by meritocratic ideals and, thus, works against justice and solidarity in favour of “excellence” (p.16). McRobbie (2015), in a psychoanalytical vein, questions if this “split-self” between desire for perfection and self-recrimination is the melancholic effect from the giving up of feminism, and its transmutation into a “can do and must do better” ethos and its associated individualising forces (p.16). Drawing on the broader discourses of ‘self-help’ books, Gill and Orgad (2015) explain that ‘confidence’ and ‘self-belief’ incite women to regulate their bodies and themselves constantly in the pursuit of happiness and success. This redirection at oneself and psyche works to repudiate mutual trust, commitment and inter-dependence, as shameful, which is the “lifeblood of neoliberalism” (p.342). Rottenberg (2014) argues that the transformation of liberal feminism into a neoliberal variant makes cultural sense, as it gives neoliberalism another domain to colonise through

redirecting women away from structural inequalities and towards concerns with 'happiness' through the impossible construction of work-family balance, or both personal and work fulfilment.

Finally, an important aspect of the accounts given by women was their curious desire for gaining skills and experiences. This contrasted sharply with the desires held by the majority of both executive and non-executive men who were largely concerned with accruing power, wealth and prestige. Even when non-executive women had held "phallic desires" similar to men, they sometimes shifted over time and appeared to be "rerouted" towards non-phallic frames, such as gaining the right skills and the credibility of others. There could be a number of reasons for this apparent "movement" of the object of desire. Discourse theorists may argue, firstly, that women presented themselves in 'gender appropriate' ways with regards to desire and ambition in the workplace. In other words, women could be pursuing power and wealth but are articulating and substantiating this in gender appropriate ways. Secondly, they may also suggest that some non-executive women are repudiating their relative lack of success through the assumption of "I don't care" positions in which they redirect their desires and ambitions towards other matters in response to a lack of progress or success, and as a way to cover up any failures. This also suggests that if they 'really wanted to' they could achieve these goals.

On the other hand, psychoanalytical inflected scholars may argue, firstly, that this "re-routing" of the object of desire by non-executive women is dynamic object as it is "turned inwards". This absorption of the object of desire may represent an attempt by women to control unmanageable extra-psychic tensions in the workplace. Could the concern by non-executive women, for instance, with self-improvement and development reflect an attempt "to plug" or "fill in" a sense of lack in response to a discursive reality in which women are constructed as possessing a "confidence deficit"? There was also, secondly, some evidence to suggest that aspects of these

phallic frames were not ‘completely’ lost into the self, as some women drew on contradictory positions in which they simultaneously recognised, for instance, the importance of assuming senior level roles and higher pay. Could this represent a form of “psychic elongation” in which the phallus distracts, particularly non-executive women, from what is *actually* required for success and, therefore, endowing men with neoliberal privileges? Does this point towards a much deeper psychic life of the phallus in tropologically reshaping the psyche and pleasure of neoliberal subjects?

I conceptualise this position, overall, as a “somasochistic, up-down position” as, whilst women self-berate for not expressing qualities associated with confidence and wish, therefore, to be psychically “cracked open” and subordinated, at the mercy of the phallus, they also appear to gain significant pleasure from self-development and improvement. This position can be described as “up-down” as despite bringing self-pleasure and enjoyment, this appears to distract women from what is *actually* required from them in order to attain success within the phallic economy.

This central aim of this chapter has been to conceptualise the operation of power in the workplace as a “phallic economy” in which two global, inter-relational positions are constructed at work. On the one hand, men are perceived of as innately confident. Men are sensed as externalizing qualities such as aggression, narcissism, defensiveness and deviousness. On the other hand, women are constructed as lacking confidence and in deficit. Psychoanalytical scholars, such as Jessica Benjamin (2004), may argue that such behaviours reflect the inability of men to contain their excitement and represent a lack of self-control from which there is involuntary discharge. This “phallic discharge” leaks from the uncontained to the container position and configures itself as feminine weakness, and thus, becomes gendered and signifies phallic emasculation. This creates a split between the active and passive positions and how inter-gender relations are forged.

This raises a number of interesting questions based on the empirical data presented in this chapter: Are executive and non-executive men over-stimulated and excited from their desires for wealth and power in organisations, particularly in light of the adverse implications that chasing their desires can have on themselves and others? What is the relationship between this and the qualities expressed by men in the workplace as constructed discursively by women? Does this “externalising of masculinity” leak into the “container” position, giving rise to a “female persecutory figure”, and triggering a psycho-discursive dynamic of self-recrimination? Does this discharge overall create a split complementarity between the “uncontained, active” and “contained, passive” positions?

From the phallic economy emerges a tale of two workers: first, men occupying a successful position but precariously exposed to the whim of the phallus and, second, women forced a subordinate position, “cracked open”, shamed, self-berating and seeking pleasure in self-development as a way to fill a psychic deficit. I am neither suggesting that the assumption of senior positions constitutes some ‘natural’ site for pleasure nor that all executive and non-executive men and executive women aspire for wealth and power. I recognise that career progression and success can take on multiple significations for both men and women. However, I reject the idea that women do not want promotion or financial remuneration in comparison to men, as this assumes that women are free agents, able to make this choice, whilst foreclosing the discursive reality and link between hierarchy, wealth and power within the finance and accounting sector; To suggest that success is about the individual is to disregard the fundamental ways in which it is structured, and the unequal distribution of wealth and power. The evidence presented in this chapter challenges this assumption by alerting us to a lurking phallic ecosystem in which certain subjects are shaped in its image, even when it is detrimental to them, whilst other positions are subordinated.

Although confidence is a fundamental tool in the psychic life of the phallus, as Rosalind Gill (2016) remarked at a recent conference, it is often difficult to challenge or persuade others of the detrimental effect of such discourses, as they are associated with innocuous ideas of self-empowerment, self-esteem and making better decisions. By situating confidence within a broader phallic economy, I was able to further problematise confidence by revealing its paradoxical composition; Whereas, on the one hand, confidence is constructed as a necessity in the phallic economy for both men and women, it is associated with the “uncontained position” and qualities such as aggression, defensiveness, narcissism and deviousness. This position reflects the inability of subjects to control their desires, and hold onto their ‘excitement’, leading to phallic discharge, which can have adverse implications on both the self and others. The “container-contained position” is, conversely, constructed as sub-optimum as it is associated with passivity and femininity. However, this position represents greater control and agency over oneself and one’s inter-relational ties through such qualities as reflexivity, deliberation and pragmatism. This represents a “Confidence Paradox” as what is constructed as ‘optimum’ at work represents precarious, uncontrollable states in which the subject is psychically “cracked open” and intrusive on others. This raises questions regarding how misunderstandings of the qualities associated with the container-contained position can be challenged. For instance, how can the container-contained position, as a position of strength, be “held onto” during traumatic moments of psychic discharge without being intruded into and, consequently, cracked open? Moreover, how can the container position be used to redirect psychic discharge towards the inter-relational process itself rather than reproducing violence and, thus, breaking out of a straight gender complementarity and freeing oneself up? This could potentially create space in which aggression can be reworked and mediated.

Conclusion

One of the aims outlined at the start of this thesis was to identify the construction of shared frames of understanding in the workplace. This chapter has responded to this by exploring the importance of confidence tropes for women in understanding themselves, their environment and position in relation to men within a “phallic economy”. The idea of the phallus is drawn on in this chapter to symbolize how confidence tropes are phallic in nature, emerging from positions of dominance, power and aggression. I argue that women are constructed in the finance and accounting sector as bearing a “confidence deficit” for not expressing qualities associated with confidence, such as aggression and narcissism. Thus, I explore how the inter-relational construction of confidence is not a ‘even’ one but fundamentally phallogentric. I explore how women self-recriminate for expressing qualities disassociated with confidence, such as such reflexivity, contemplation and pragmatism. I argue that “Confidence Repertoires” have a pernicious force of, firstly, distracting women from broader discriminatory norms that favour masculine behaviours and, secondly, individualising this as something that women need to self-manage and respond to on their own. I explain how this positions women in an “ideological dilemma” (Billig et al., 1988) as, despite attempting to distance themselves from qualities such as aggression and defensiveness, they sometimes felt obliged to mimic them to ensure that they did not fall behind colleagues with regards with remuneration and promotion. The implication of this is that women indirectly construct qualities associated with masculinity as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the “phallic economy”.

In the final section of the chapter, I explore how the accounts given by women focused on the desire to gain new skills and experiences. I explain how this was curious as it contrasted sharply with the desires held by men who were largely concerned with accruing power, wealth and prestige at

work. Even when women did hold phallic frames of success, these appeared to shift temporally as women sought pleasure in the self. I suggest that this *turning inwards* by women towards self-pleasure could reflect an attempt “to plug” or “fill in” a sense of lack generated by their self-beratement for failing to express qualities associated with confidence. However, in some cases, the accounts given by women contradictorily continued to recognise the importance of phallic frames of success, for instance, assuming senior positions in organisations. I suggest that this could represent a form of “psychic elongation” in which the phallus distracts, particularly non-executive women, from what is *actually* required for success at work and, therefore, open up greater opportunities for men, endowing them with greater privileges. This could point towards a much deeper psychic life of the phallus in reshaping tropologically the psyche and pleasure of neoliberal subjects. I conceptualise this position, overall, as a “somasochistic, up-down position” as, whilst women self-berate for not expressing qualities associated with confidence and wish, therefore, to be psychically “cracked open” and subordinated, at the mercy of the phallus, they also appear to gain significant pleasure from self-development and improvement. This position can be described as “up-down” as despite bringing self-pleasure and enjoyment, this appears to distract women from what is *actually* required to attain success within the phallic economy.

Chapter Six

Senses of the Subject

As discussed in Chapter Two, there has been significant scholarship in recent years exploring neoliberalism, particularly from a broader, Foucauldian inspired perspective (Brown, 2003; Rose, 1992). This does not consider how neoliberalism is lived out at the subject-level or the sensuous conditions in which subjects are “sensed” and “sensing”. This chapter responds to this by exploring the psychic reality of the subject and how neoliberalism is, for instance, embodied and registered emotionally by subjects in finance and accounting, what Butler (2015) terms “senses of the subject”. In particular, the chapter explores the injuries inflicted on the subject by demanding and unfair organisational norms and practices, and how these evoke psychic states of paranoia, anxiety, guilt and fear. The chapter, overall, contributes to our understanding of how subjectivities are constituted from the ‘ground-up’, through shared senses of the subject, and how these connect with broader neoliberal discourses. This focus on ‘shared senses’, thus, averts the risk of individualizing and pathologising psychic experiences evoked from the injuries inflicted upon the subject by organisational norms and practices.

The chapter identifies three senses of the subject. First, “Senses of Precariousness” explore the heightened imagery in interpretative repertoires regarding chronic workloads and hours, commercial pressures and scrutiny, and how this evokes senses of suffocation, powerlessness and a lack of control. Second, in “Senses of Solitude”, executive women touched on the challenges they had forging meaningful relationships with others both at

work and in their personal lives due to their long working hours and competitive, individualistic workplace cultures. Third, in “Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness”, both executive and non-executive women drew on interpretative repertoires that evoked a sense of paranoia, guilt and discomfort regarding the unknowingness of, for instance, who they could trust at work, how others perceived them, and whether taking maternity leave or starting a family would adversely impact their future career success or inter-relational ties.

The central contribution of this chapter is that although subjects avowed the injuries they sustained as a result of demanding and often unfair organisational norms and practices, they were, simultaneously, decontextualized as subjects failed to link them explicitly to structural causes or provide a critical appraisal for their emergence. Rather than prompting subjects into positions of anger or resistance, executive and non-executive women tended to sense these injuries as individual battles to be fought alone rather than as indicative of a broader regime working against them as women. Indeed, in some cases, these positions perniciously evoked senses of guilt in women for breaking organisational norms and practices.

I argue that this can overall be conceptualised as a “double down” position, in which subjects not only passively endure injuries, such as anxiety and paranoia, but *double down* their injuries by constructing themselves as the origin of their wounds. In this way, injuries are psychically *folded over* and, thus, felt “twice over” as a form of self-beratement, particularly in cases from which senses of “guilt” were evoked. The chapter suggests that this *doubling down* may represent a fallacious attempt by subjects to “plaster” over their scrapes, bumps and bruises and, ironically foreclose their injuries and, in turn, evoke a sense of omnipotence and control in contexts of precariousness, solitude and unknowingness. However, as Butler (2015) explains, senses of the self are not primary and, thus, do not register prior to the formation of thoughts. The subject may think of itself as the source of its

own senses but these norms instead precede the subject, impressing upon them and open up an affective register. Therefore, senses of omnipotence or the “I” are in reality senses of norms that emerge from the institutions and inter-relational ties within which we are formed and by which we continue to be installed.

Senses of Precariousness

Precariousness was one of the defining features of work in the finance and accounting sector, with extensive and intensive working patterns, having to work across multiple projects, commercial pressures and problematic inter-relational ties. These form part of a broader neoliberal discourse that attempts to construct subjects as responsive to the highly competitive and ‘agile’ market conditions, and inflicted sensations of anxiety, shock and even fear in subjects. These organisational norms positioned women with familial commitments as particularly vulnerable to injury. Patricia, a non-executive, describes her challenges with work-life balance following her return from maternity leave:

Patricia (Non-Executive): [I was] up to my ears in client facing work, and having to be essentially very reactive on other fronts, swamped with client engagements not really being able to stand back be more strategic ...just literally fire fighting for year after year sometimes, and just being so swamped just to be drowning in reactive work where I felt out of control of my own career, of my own day, of my own week and just working silly hours, and having to do that at the same time as raising a young family, just the sheer amount of stuff to do and the lack of control over what had to be done, was a real hump for me, I mean I was an associate director for a long time, and possibly going on maternity leave twice in that period... trying to remember things, to be trusted again with new people who’d come in the interim period, especially when you’re half frazzled from sleep deprivation. The most challenging period was when I was swamped with work,

slightly lacking in confidence, and had at the same time a lot of outside of work responsibility which shrunk my available time to deal with work stuff, that was a real kinda period where I felt like I was wading through a bog and not really getting anywhere.

Similar to some of the accounts in Chapter 5, Patricia associates her lack of self-confidence with the long time she spent as an associate director before her promotion. However, rather than constructing Patricia as lacking the technical knowledge or experience required to perform a role effectively, attributes one may associate with “confidence”, the account instead draws on heightened imagery to symbolise chronic amounts of work. The imagery of “wading through a bog and not really getting any anywhere” and being “so swamped just to be drowning” evoke a sense of suffocation and breathlessness. The “lack of control over what had to be done”, “fire fighting” and being “reactive on other fronts” evoke a sense of complete powerlessness ‘to combat’ the excessive demands placed on Patricia. The implication of the account is that intensive and extensive workloads are constructed as the problem of the individual, as a ‘lack of self-confidence’ or as one’s “hump” to overcome, rather than critiquing unfair organisational structures within which the subject operates.

Shirley, a non-executive in a public sector finance team, gives an account of why she left her previous big four employer:

Shirley (Non-Executive): there’s always pressure on recovery rates, so, you’ve got some people saying, ‘don’t book as much time to the job’, top down, ‘spend less time on this job’, ‘you need to focus on that job and this job and this job’. In retrospect what I should have done is been a bit firmer about why did it take longer and to either get assistance or to go, ‘do you know what Shirley’, make myself go, ‘it doesn’t need to be perfect, it needs to be good enough that it’s right’. But I didn’t do that, so I ended up working a lot on hours that I then didn’t book which meant that nobody really above me knew how many hours I was doing. Your other

friends can make commitments in the evening and make it and that sometimes you have to cancel, and between January and March, you don't make any commitments and you can't take any holiday. I'm really not enjoying this, I want to stay and become Manager but if I'm going to do that I need to change things. I signed up for a new department which meant I had a bit more freedom in terms of the way I managed my hours which was good ...I got rid of some of the clients I really hated, and kind of got it back on track.

Shirley explains that there was a lot of pressure from superiors to charge fewer hours than she was working. She, therefore, "ended up working a lot of hours" which were not recognised. The extensive workload from multiple projects and long hours adversely impacted Shirley's private life to the extent that she was "really not enjoying" work anymore. However, despite superiors intensifying and extending her working hours, the account constructs Shirley as responsible for resolving this challenge. Shirley, consequently, attempts to produce higher amounts of work at a lower quality in order to meet the higher work demands, "it doesn't need to be perfect", and change her career path as a way to avoid such highly pressurised circumstances, "I need to change things".

Catherine, a non-executive in a large investment bank, describes vividly how she feels when she is losing money from an investment:

Catherine (Non-Executive): I've had instances where you're losing so much money quickly that it's like you're going in to shock at your desk. It's like a reverse jackpot, if you can imagine that; You can't believe how much money you can lose quickly. But I think it's better to get out of the position and then just reassess; because even if you've booked a big loss, you are at least out of it and you can think, okay, if it keeps going, will I put it back on or how am I going to make the money back. You're sort of outside looking in, you can sort of see it in a better frame. Try and be a bit more circumspect about it because it's always better to be watching the train crash than to be in it, so you can get a bit

of perspective. But then again, you know, because it's very easy to say this when you're not the person that's involved in it. It's easy to give advice whereas when you're in the situation, it's hard to think clearly sometimes. I don't want to sound like I'm a sage or something because it's very hard when you're in it. There's merit in just shutting down and taking a step back, seeing how things develop, rather than just hoping it comes back the next day, because it might keep going. You might just lose more and more. It's important to try and get some calm happening.

Catherine describes how she goes “into shock” at her desk when she loses money on an investment. The account draws on the heightened imagery of a “reverse jackpot” and “train crash” to symbolise the sense of calamity and panic evoked during such highly pressurised events. The function of the repertoire is to construct the subject as having to draw on one's own psychic capacities, for instance, maintaining a “cool head” and taking “a step back”, in order to “be a bit more circumspect” and “get a bit of perspective” in such stressful circumstances at work. However, despite this, the repertoire is contradictory as “to think clearly” is “very hard when you're in” such pressurised moments. This raises questions regarding whether Catherine is able to remain ‘calm’ and ‘collective’ when she is losing money. The account overall constructs calmness as something that can be rationalised and proactively managed by the individual. Preoccupations and challenges are therefore resolved through the appropriate leveraging of calmness.

Brenda, a non-executive in an investment bank, gives an account of the fear she had of a previous manager:

Brenda: (Non-Executive) I remember in one review she actually had a go at me for not making enough tea which I did actually, I used to go and make three times a day, 12 cups of tea, get everyone's order right; I'd get everyone's lunch for them. She'd make me wrap her Christmas presents, get her laundry. God, I

remember once when I sent out an email and I realised I'd sent it out to the client, it was a tiny thing on the spreadsheet, really small that you can rectify. I retracted the email from everyone as quickly as possible, we all shared passwords, we could all go into each other's emails, I ran around the office and went into everyone's email... not only deleting it from their email box, so she couldn't see it, you can see when someone recalls an email, also going into the history and deleting it from there. I did that for 10 people just so she wouldn't see that I'd sent it out twice. It got to the point where I was so petrified that, oh my god, I even started smoking again but then I was petrified of her finding out because one of the sales guys told me in the smoking room and he was like, 'saw you in the smoking room and they all turned on me'. I'm not even allowed to smoke now, but you've tied me to smoke, it was really tough, really, really tough.

Brenda recounts a “really hard” period with a manager who would review her performance based on whether she made “enough tea”, and would make her “get her laundry” and “wrap her Christmas presents” up. The account evokes the traditional patriarchal figure and that of his “office wife” who is responsible for domestic duties, such as preparing food and cleaning, and complete servitude to others. However, this patriarchal figure is curious as it symbolises that of a woman and not a man. On one occasion, she emailed a spreadsheet to a client that contained a small error and was “so petrified” that she not only retracted the email, but also logged into the email accounts of all ten recipients of the email and deleted it from their inbox and history. Brenda explains how she was anxious during this period that she even took up smoking but then had to give it up as she was “petrified of her [superior] finding out”. The panicked account of Brenda running around the office, deleting every possible trace of her mistake, evokes a sense of absolute fear of retribution by her manager.

Despite working in elite, well remunerated and prestigious financial and accounting organisations, the accounts given by both executive and non-executive women detailed a number of precarious organisational practices such as extensive and intensive working practices, often relating to short-

term, project based, client facing work, and challenging relational dynamics with superiors. However, this section of the chapter was primarily concerned with the way in which these precarious aspects of work were sensed, particularly focusing on how subjects drew upon heightened imagery to symbolise different psychic states, such as, uncontrollability, fear, shock and unhappiness.

Senses of Solitude

Executive women in particular gave accounts in which they described how the pressures of work or family life, and the competitive workplace environments, meant they had lost or struggled to forge meaningful relationships with others. Julie, an executive at a multi-national investment firm, laments how the intense nature of her work means she now has very few friends:

Julie (Executive): if you're in the middle of a transaction and making it happen, it's sort of totally irrelevant what time of day or night it is, you just work as you need to get stuff done. I've always had this from friends, 'you're insane, I don't understand why you need to do this at 3 o'clock in the morning'. There's no nine to five. It's never down. You never get a chance to really be off, you're always onto the next thing. You've always got a lot of adrenaline haven't you, travelling round your system keeping you going. I think that's why it's consuming, that's the only thing you can focus on and it takes up all your brain space, you don't have space for anything else. You certainly don't have a very active social life.

Darren: [Laughter] And when do your friends ask you these questions?

Julie (Executive): [Laughter] What the one or two friends that you actually have left by the time you've done it for a couple of years! It's not like you go out during the week. When it's really

bad a transaction, people probably don't see you for several months. It's a very competitive environment, you have very close working relationships with people, how many real friendships come out of it is always quite challenging. I think the other complexity as a working mother, you get to a point where you then have to also prioritise, so your relationship, your children, you've got your job and stuff - the sort of social friendship part becomes more challenging [and]...how do you actually really know that somebody is a friend or not?

The account draws on heightened imagery to represent the intensive and extensive nature of Julie's work. The image of, for instance, "adrenaline ...travelling around your system" during extensive periods of work, "keeping you going", and how the intensity of workload completely subsumes her, taking "up all your brain space", to the extent that it is "totally irrelevant what time of day or night it is". The implication of this is that Julie is "never down" and her workload dominates her life to that extent that she does not "have a very active social life". Julie explains how she only has one or two remaining friends but does not often see them for several months at a time due to the intensity of her project work. Although she has close working relationships with colleagues, Julie suggests that these relationships are quite "challenging", due to the "very competitive environment" in which she works. Although there appears to be an attempt to construct this position in a somewhat 'light-hearted' or humorous way, I could not help but notice the sense of irony in the account given by Julie. The function of the account overall constructed a solitary figure of Julie as neither able to forge trustworthy relationships with her competitive and individualistic colleagues nor privately able to build new or support existing ones due to the consuming nature of her work.

Sarah, an executive at a multi-national investment bank, describes her concerns regarding not being able to attend professional networking events:

Sarah (Executive): I'm now beginning to experience, which is a bit feeling left out and holding me back, is because of my home life and wanting to get home to spend more time with the family, I am no longer going to as many networking events after work. I've never really thought about the importance of the role of events that I used to go to. There's a sort of a bit of an alchemy that goes on with the people that you meet and the things that you learn at events. I feel a bit 'Cinderella' sometimes and I'd never heard that from any other females I'd spoken to when I was preparing to go off and have my baby. I feel left out when I can't go to the networking event; it feels like I'm Cinderella not going to the Ball and it's not because you're going to these events for fun, you meet people. It's because they're really important, they're important to create awareness of things you wouldn't otherwise be aware of, go to new places, hear new ideas and so I think that's one area that has actually surprised me quite a lot since coming back from having maternity leave.

Sarah explains how since starting a family, she no longer has the time to attend corporate networking events. She suggests that she did not attend these events "for fun" but to meet people, and this was important for opening up future potential opportunities. The account draws on the heightened image of "Cinderella not going to the Ball" which symbolises Sarah as a poor "girl", condemned to drudgery by her "wicked step mother", constrained from transforming herself into a "princess" and escaping to attend a "ball" to meet other people and hear of new ideas. This apparent innocuous image provides further insight into how women symbolise the distinctively gendered challenges regarding balancing home and work life by drawing upon a highly gendered 'fairy-tale'.

Leanne, a non-executive at a global investments firm, describes how she is often the only woman in meetings:

Leanne (Non-Executive): I would say in 95% of my meetings I'm the only woman. There's very few women who are on the deal

front. I think having to work a little harder to find common ground - and this is a very relationship driven business - and a lot of business is done outside of the office - dinners, sporting events - and again I think there's always, in the back of my mind, a sense of how that fits in for me. I've been to some events for women in the industry where it's at some fashion house and we sit down and talk about whatever the latest fashion trends and we have cocktails and we talk about business. There's not usually men at those events and the men are doing the same thing at the rugby match but that's not particularly helpful, so I have to go to the rugby match, which is fine, it's all good, but I'm not the world's biggest rugby fan and I'd much rather be at the fashion house. Its little things like that where you just feel like you have to go a bit more outside of yourself to do that effort. I do that more than probably my colleagues do in my direction.

As a result of regularly being the only woman in meetings and client events, Leanne explains how she feels that she has to “work a little harder to find common ground” with the men in the room. However, Leanne suggests this is challenging as important relationship building with colleagues and clients occurs outside the office in traditional masculine environments, as such sporting events. Leanne describes how she would prefer to go, in contrast, to women events and “have cocktails” in “some fashion house”, and “talk about business” in a more comfortable environment. The interpretative repertoire constructs Leanne as going “a bit more outside” of herself to make the effort required to build relationships with predominately men in masculine environments. The implication of the repertoire is that within less familiar contexts, Leanne must *extend* and draw on her own psychic capacities in order build inter-relational ties with her male colleagues.

Executive women often gave accounts of battles they had to fight alone in order to achieve parity in the workplace. Jane, an executive in a mid-tier firm, described her struggle for equal pay:

Jane (Executive): there have been moments when I've really had to fight and I've felt like I've had to fight in a way that I didn't feel comfortable fighting and it would have been very easy for me to say, 'oh well maybe next year'. Within the partnership there are ladder rungs, you move up or down, I kinda got frozen, not frozen coz I wasn't doing a good job, but frozen because within the ladder there's a gateway at the mid-point, so once you get to the mid-point you can't get through to the next level on the ladder unless you tick various boxes, mainly around financials, but they only look at the finances in one particular way. My direct immediate team was probably making about £850,000 contribution and the gateway threshold's about £1.2 million so I miss it, but I was contributing over £2 million to the business. 'What is it that I need to be doing to enable this to happen?' here's all the evidence, 'that's not what the system says'. Meanwhile someone else in another team, same sort of scenario, was doing less in his own team, sailed through. I did get through but I had to fight to make them see differently, whereas the chap in the other team went on through. The same arguments and we're chatting to each other, 'how did you get through this bit?' 'how did you persuade them?' he sails through I didn't, I had to fight, I really had to fight...

Darren: What had he done differently?

Jane (Executive): Not a lot really to be honest when we analysed it, it was just he was seen as the sort of 'one of the lads', the difference was that he was kinda a bit matey and there was some beers and cricket and whatever it was that sort of fit in that circle. I don't play in and don't chose to play in and don't want to play in, I'm me and I wanna be rewarded on merit. I did get through but felt like I really had to fight for it. Not in a threatening way, it wasn't like make him not me, this is discrimination, it was none of that, but I really felt like it wasn't easy, and it should have been.

Jane describes how she became "frozen" within the pay ladder. She explains how, in order to move up into the higher pay rung, she had to prove that she had contributed £1.2 million. Although she believed she had contributed more than this, it was estimated that her team were directly contributing less than £1.2 million. Jane also explained how she had been speaking with a male colleague during this time that had "sailed through the process", and could not discern any significant differences between

their cases. She suggests that he had successfully moved up the pay rung as he was “one of the lads” and “kinda a bit matey”, presumably with those responsible for authorising such decisions. The account repeatedly comes back to the idea that Jane “really had to fight” to be remunerated fairly. However, when Jane appears to recognise the incident as discriminatory, she repudiates it, “it was none of that”, and constructs it as an individual battle that she had to fight alone rather than collectively with other women. This raises questions regarding why women are hesitant to signal discriminatory processes at work. Do women, for instance, fear retribution or displacement if they do so? The frequent return to the idea of ‘fighting’ symbolises the considerable energy expended by Jane in gaining fair recognition for her efforts and successes.

Similarly, Kim, an executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, describes how she had to challenge her unfair remuneration:

Kim (Executive): When I first became an equity partner, after the first few years, there was a guy who works with me. We get on really well, but he got in as an equity partner before they sort of put the blockers down because he became a salary partner maybe two years before me. We were doing, in my view, the same job. There was one point where he was getting paid almost half what I was getting again. I didn’t make big fuss about it, I didn’t appeal. I just felt it was the inequality of it. It wasn’t about the absolute numbers, it was the fact that we were doing the same thing, and if the difference had been smaller, I probably wouldn’t have but it was such a big difference at that stage. Now that’s all reversed now and it’s all moved on but I felt I really had to make enquiries and just ask.

Kim describes how a close male colleague became partner quicker than her. However, she explains how they were doing the same role but he was earning almost double what she was. She felt like she had to “make enquiries and just ask” how remuneration was done as “there was a lack of

transparency”. However, Kim insists that she “didn’t make a big fuss about it” and “didn’t appeal” it but felt as though she had to enquire due to the “inequality” of the situation. Similar to the account given by Jane, this raises questions regarding why women are unwilling to avow potential discriminatory processes? Are they fearful of “playing the discrimination card”? What are they fearful of? The implication of this is that responsibility for apparent discriminatory processes are stacked on the individual to fight and battle through.

This section has explored how intensive and extensive work loads, competitive organisational norms, and the pressures emerging from balancing this with one’s personal life, mean that women struggled to maintain existing or forge new ‘meaningful’ relationships with others, particularly other women. Many of the executive women in particular noted the absence of other women in the workplace, and the challenges with having to establish affinities with men, particularly in masculine contexts, such as bar and rugby matches. Executive women, in particular, noted occasions when they had to battle for equal recognition, in terms of pay and promotion, with male colleagues. Even when they recognised the potential discriminatory implications of their situations, they quickly repudiated this and appeared reluctant to make such a provocative move. This raises questions regarding why the women were hesitant. Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, this would have been an opportunity for the researcher to delve deeper, and ask questions such as: “When you say ‘there was none of that’ with regards to discrimination, what do you mean by that?” This might have helped illicit greater detail on the frames inhibiting the subject from challenging organisational norms and practices, which are sensed as unjust. The implication of this is that such challenges were individualised and carried forth by the individual, as battles one should fight or not, without “making a fuss”.

Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness

Both executive and non-executive women drew on interpretative repertoires that evoked a sense of paranoia and discomfort regarding the unknowingness of, for instance, who they could trust at work, how others perceived them, and whether taking maternity leave or starting a family would adversely impact their future career success. These interpretative repertoires also had an individualising force in which senses of unknowingness became the sole responsibility of the subject. Janet, throughout her account, repeatedly came back to her preoccupation with how she would manage her future career and a new family:

Janet (Non-Executive): I think the biggest sacrifice is the kids - I've not had kids. I always make time for things that are important to me, for example, going to the gym and going on holiday, but I think the barrier for me is not having kids and even now it's that niggling feeling at the back of my head that says, because I'm married now, it's at that point and I feel that if I have kids, my career would take a back step inevitably and that annoys me because after working for so long so hard, it annoys me that just because I'm at that point when I've got to make that decision that my career would go backwards because of that. It probably would remain stagnant, I can't see myself moving for example to partner unless I come back to work immediately and put the kid and the family life on hold, then I can see it happening; Maybe there are certain things that I can do to make it work, but equally, I think something has got to give when you have a child, and I just think that, for example, your time, can you really work the hours that I work now if I had a child - I don't know whether I could, and if you are not working the hours, your role within the organisation might have to change because clients have got expectations, they want things delivered, turned around very quickly, it's quite a fast paced environment. Can you juggle that and children, I don't know. Some people do it and I guess that's my challenge and that's something I've been thinking about because I do want to be in that box where I can make it work and I'll do everything that I

can to make it work, but it will mean me coming back to work straight away. Most people I know take a year off and I don't think I would.

Janet explains how she has a “niggling feeling at the back of her head” that once she has children her “career would take a back step inevitably” which “annoys” her. Consequently, she “just can't see” how she would ever reach partnership in her organisation unless she were to return to work immediately following the birth of a child and put her “family life on hold”. The interpretative repertoire constructs a knowingness in which Janet is aware that having a family might have adverse implications on her future career success whilst, simultaneously, evoking deep discomfort regarding the unknowingness of ‘if’, ‘when’ or ‘to what extent’ this will impact her ability to manage her work-life balance and, therefore, pursue a successful career. However, the interpretative repertoire appears to shift as Janet describes, for instance, how client demands and chronic workloads and hours are her “challenge”, and how she will “do everything ...to make it work”. The implication of the repertoire is, therefore, to construct intensive and extensive workplace practices and their adverse implications on subjects, particularly working mothers, as the responsibility of the individual rather than of unfair organisational structures.

Natalie, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, has recently found out she is pregnant:

Natalie (Non-executive): Well, so interestingly I'm actually fifteen weeks pregnant so it's quite an interesting time because if you'd asked me a couple of months ago I'd be like, ‘well, I'm going to do the director programme’, ‘I'm going to do this’, ‘I'm going to do that’. I've always known that I wanted kids and I've always known I'd call it a pit stop, take a bit of time out and at the moment I'm still very career driven and people say as soon as you have a child, your priorities change. I know right now that there is going to be a delay or break in my career but I still plan to come

back full time. I don't know how long I'm going to take off yet but at the point I want to come back and I will start working towards the director programme. At first I thought 'oh, I want to take the year off' and my husband is very supportive of that. He keeps saying how often in your lifetime are you going to take time, are you going to have that opportunity to take to a year to spend with your child but there was a lady in my team who went on maternity leave recently and she only took six months off for her two children, and I think is it going to look like I don't have dedication to the team if I decide to take a year off. It sounds awful, does it look bad for me to take more time. Should I take six months and then comeback on a gradual basis? I want to say to him [her manager] if I take a year off I'm still really, really dedicated to the team, I still want to come back, I'm still very dedicated to my job but at the same time, my priorities have to be adjusted accordingly.

The interpretative repertoire constructs a knowingness that having children would entail a "delay or break", "a pit stop" and "a bit of time out" in Natalie's career. However, Natalie is preoccupied with how much time she should take off for maternity leave and associates taking more than six months off with being undedicated to her role and team. The interpretative repertoire, therefore, constructs a sense of unknowingness regarding whether Jane will be judged for taking more than six months off, and whether her career will suffer following her return to work. This unknowingness evokes a sense of guilt in which Jane throughout the account anxiously insists that she "plan[s] to come back full time" and work "towards the director programme", and tell her manager that she is "still really, really dedicated to the team" and job. The implication of these repertoires is that they construct maternity absence, a legal entitlement in the UK, as inconsiderate of colleagues and organisations. This appears to trigger a psycho-discursive dynamic in which the subject feels guilty for taking maternity leave. These repertoires, therefore, appear to have an individualising force in which women take full on responsibility for and self-berate for not supporting their teams during maternity leave.

Similarly, Anna, a non-executive in a public sector organisation, raises a number of difficult questions she has in mind regarding changing jobs and having another baby:

Anna (Non-Executive): I need to think about my progression from now because I've got to a point where I'm comfortable. I know what I'm doing and I guess I'm not being stretched as much as I could be. And that is the signal that I need to do something about it. And then it's also balancing it, I've got an 18 month old daughter, so I only had six months of work and then came back full time because I've put effort into my career, worked hard through school, university and I just don't want to chuck it away and plus I just get bored if I was at home. So, now it's like, well, if we're going to have another one – are we going to have another one? When is the right time to have the other one and then the impact on your career. If you move jobs and you got pregnant, well that's really not good but even though I feel kind of guilty in a way, if I was to have another one because you're letting people down because you're obviously going to have to be out of the office for a period of time. I'm sort of in a bit of a doldrums at the moment because knowing that I need to progress my career but at the same time it's like balancing it with family life and making sure how does that all fit together? I felt really guilty when I found out I was pregnant with my daughter and telling my boss because I hadn't been in the new role for very long but, you know, I genuinely hope he knows that I was committed to the job because I worked right until the last minute before I basically dropped. Right at the start I'm only taking six months, I will be coming back and he's like, 'yeah, yeah, yeah whatever'. Then I've done as I said I would do and I'm really happy, that was a right decision even before I had my baby, it proved that it was still the right decision after. So, yeah, I just need to work out what to do now.

Anna is considering moving jobs as she feels as though she should now be thinking about her career progression and finding a job that will “stretch” or develop the skills and experiences she requires to move up in her career. Anna associates this with struggling to balance familial responsibilities and the six-month maternity leave she took for her first child. There is knowingness that taking maternity leave can impact

one's career, as Anna explains that she did not take a longer period as she did not "want to chuck it [*her career*] away". Anna raises the idea that she is considering having another child and potentially moving jobs, but she expresses a sense of unknowingness regarding when the "best time" is to make this decision and the potential "impact" on her career. The unknowingness evokes a sense of turmoil in Anna as she describes herself as "in the doldrums" knowing that she both wants to progress her career whilst balance her familial commitments, and deciding on the best time to have another baby. In particular, the interpretative repertoire evokes a strong sense of guilt as Anna feels as though by taking maternity leave she is "letting people down", for instance, letting herself and others down as she worked hard at university and during her career, and wanting to reap the benefits of this. She recounts how before taking her first maternity leave, she felt guilty telling her boss, insisting to him that she was "committed to the job", that she is "only taking six months" off, and working until she "basically dropped". Anna constructs her decision to take only six months maternity leave as the "right decision", which implies that this did not impact her career. The implication of this repertoire is that women individualise and self-berate any challenges that are generated when they go on maternity leave.

Jessie, a non-executive at a mid-tier accounting describes her cautiousness when interacting with colleagues:

Darren: In what ways are you cautious?

Jessie (Non-Executive): I would wait until I had a trusted relationship with someone before necessarily laying all of my cards on the table. I would be more cautious in a room full of people that I didn't know than I would otherwise be, and I think things through a little more. How will this response come across? Will it actually achieve what I'm looking to achieve and how will I be perceived? It makes things slightly more of a challenge because it's like trying to play a game of chess like on the side, you're kind of thinking 'is this the right thing to be seen to be

said', and I'm sure lots of people kind of go through that motion in their head, particularly in a big group of people; should I be the first to speak, what will happen? I think there's more politics at play. Other people are being more strategic in terms of what they're doing and saying and therefore you need to be a little more cautious of what you're saying and doing too, and I think it's about getting comfortable with the next position. You know, I've been in a more junior position for a while and now I'm in a different role, it's part of getting confidence in my view in what I do actually think about things and why and giving that more thought, that I just need that bit more confidence in doing before I share more. I hope that in a few years' time I would feel more confident.

Jessie is more cautious now since she has moved up into a more senior role. She explains that she must wait until she has a "trusted relationship with someone" before "laying all [her] cards on the table", and how she is more cautious in a room full of people than she "would [normally] otherwise be". Jessie draws on the heightened image of playing chess to symbolise the 'motions in her head' when she is with colleagues and how she questions herself, "is this the right thing to be seen to be said". The interpretative repertoire constructs a sense of knowingness whereby Jessie is cognizant that her colleagues will judge her for what she says and does. However, there remains a sense of unknowingness regarding the terms by which she will be judged and by whom. This unknowingness evokes a sense of paranoia in which Jessie mistrusts others at work and constantly questions what she says and does, "what will happen?" and whether this complies with the expectations of others. Despite this, Jessie offers an undistorted view of the oppressive culture in which she works and, instead, individualises the causes of her sense of paranoia as the result of her perceived lack of experience and confidence. The implication of this is that Jessie appears to individualise problematic organisational norms as a personal lack of "confidence", emerging from the fact that she has recently taken up a more senior position. However, this constructs hostile organisational environments as the problem of the subject to overcome, which in turn, works to deflect attention, criticism and challenge from the source of these problems.

Deborah, an executive at an international investment bank, describes her senses of turmoil emerging from her exclusion by peers:

Deborah (Executive): Yeah, I mean, so there's a group in the US of five people who basically work with my boss, and they kind of manage the firm and all, and I kind of felt like, why am I not part of that? And the reality is, what's Deborah going to bring, they don't believe Deborah's going to bring something. And that's probably true and it maybe hurts and then you have to think, okay, 'how do I do that?' How would I bring value, or, Deborah, do you have the balls to raise your hand and say, 'I want to be part of this, I think I can add something', and then are you just afraid to be told, 'no, you can't add anything'. I should ask only to be told no, but then I'll know that I don't have any value versus just the voice in my head. But then I have to live with the answer, and I think I already know the answer. But sometimes it's okay to hear. I should ask for a review, but I don't ...I'm afraid I won't believe what they say, and also, I don't know if it will cause more irritation, at the same time. It's really important to hear some of the stuff that's not popular, because I think it enlightens you. If you think that advice is really authentic and coming from a proper place. If it's not coming from a proper place, it's, there's more risk to it and that's what I struggle with. You know, I love feedback, I really appreciate the feedback, and you get sense of relief, oh, you know, I kind of knew that, in the back of my head, but I wasn't sure. But it has to come from an honest place, I guess, and if it doesn't then it's harder to filter it through. But I should.

Deborah knows that her peers exclude her from a managing director team. However, there is a sense of unknowingness regarding what the reasons are for her exclusion from the executive team, and whether or not she should ask for feedback to understand why. There also appears to be, in turn, unknowingness around whether or not this feedback will be derogatory, demeaning or unfair, rather than sincere, "...it has to come from an honest place, I guess, and if it doesn't then it's harder to filter it through". This unknowingness evokes a sense of fear, "are you

just afraid to be told, no?” particularly at the prospect that the feedback may cause her further “irritation”. However, Deborah ‘really wants to know’ and appears to self-berate, “it maybe hurts”, over the unknown reasons for her exclusion. However, the interpretative repertoire shifts as Deborah moves to individualise the unknown injuries by suggesting that she must enquire and ask others what they think of her, “Deborah, do you have the balls to raise your hand...”

Sarah, an executive at a multi-national investment bank, explains how “resilience” has been important in helping her through difficult periods of her career:

Sarah (Executive): What’s helped me is probably resilience, that’s a really big thing for me. An individual’s ability to have resilience can really make or break them. And regardless of almost how talented or what kind of skills or technical skills or communication skills they have, I think if people don’t have good levels of resilience, I think people can just get burnt out, I think they can become disillusioned, they can become disenfranchised and I think one of the reasons why I think I have developed this resilience muscle is partly through running my own business, it goes back to that period where you’re not necessarily answerable to other people, you’re your own boss but equally you don’t have anybody out there to give you leadership and direction, so I think you kind of have to be pretty resilient because it’s sink or swim. There was a phrase once that somebody said which was about observe but ignore and I thought that was very powerful; So some of the things that we were talking about before around maybe other people who get recognition or claim credit for things that are not really theirs, observing it and yet somehow parking it and ignoring it, leaving it to one side, meant that I haven’t become distracted by it but I’m not unaware of it, I think it’s the ignorance that I think would be wrong, but observe and ignore I really love that phrase and I very often use that in my own day to day activities.

Sarah explains that if a person does not have adequate resilience it “can really make or break” them and they can become “disenfranchised”, “burnt out” and “disillusioned”. Sarah draws on the heightened image of a “resilience muscle” which she claims developed whilst running her own business in response to “sink or swim” moments in which she only had herself to rely on. The implication of this heightened image is that Sarah imagines an internal muscle that she has ‘grown’ and ‘thickened’ which she can flex in response to challenging or uncomfortable situations at work. For example, when colleagues are taking credit for work that they have not contributed to or when others receive undeserved recognition and, simultaneously, “putting it to one side”, “parking it and ignoring it” so that she is not “distracted by it”. The interpretative repertoire constructs a sense of unknowingness in which uncomfortable or disagreeable moments are ‘bracketed out’ from thought in order that one is not troubled by them but knowingness remains lest one forgets, as Sarah states “the ignorance ...would be wrong”. The implication of the interpretative repertoire is that the individual must contend with uncomfortable moments and manage them psychically through bracketing them out from their sense of knowingness. This has an individualizing effect whereby the individual is responsible for any injuries inflicted on them by problematic organisational norms and practices. If the subject cannot develop this protective “muscle” to flex in response to unwarranted circumstances and do not have “resilience”, then the individual is constructed as the source of their senses and are, therefore, blamed for how they feel.

Discussion: better unknowing than angry

The aim of this chapter was to explore how neoliberalism is lived out at the subject-level. This is important to address as much of the existing scholarship on neoliberalism is from a much broader, Foucauldian inspired perspective (Brown, 2003; Rose, 1992). This does not consider what Butler (2015) terms the “senses of the subject” and the sensuous conditions in

which subjects are “sensed” and “sensing” in the finance and accounting sector. The chapter has explored this through the psychic reality of the subject or how neoliberalism is, for instance, embodied or registered emotionally by subjects. In particular, the chapter has explored how injuries inflicted on the subject emerging from the intensive and extensive workplace practices and challenging inter-relational ties are registered psychically, for instance, through states of paranoia, anxiety, guilt and fear. This contributes to our understanding of how subjectivities are constituted from the ‘ground up’ through shared senses of the subject and mapping these back to broader neoliberal discourses. This negates therefore the risk of individualizing and pathologising psychic experiences evoked from the challenges of working under neoliberalism.

The chapter has identified three senses of the subject. Firstly, “Senses of Precariousness” were evoked as a result of demanding workplace conditions. Many of the interpretative repertoires drawn on were littered with heightened imagery to symbolize chronic workloads and hours, which evoked, for instance, in the case of Patricia, a sense of suffocation, powerlessness and lack of control, and in the case of Brenda, the neurotic fear of retribution by her manager. Secondly, “Senses of Solitude” emerged in the accounts given particularly by executive women as they sometimes touched on the challenges they had forging meaningful and confidential relationships with others, both at work and in their personal lives, due to their long working hours. These interpretative repertoires link to broader neoliberal discourses and, in particular, what Thrift (2000) describes as firms in a “permanent state of emergency”, due to their ambitions to remain “faster and more agile” (p.674). This has, consequently, shaped new managerial subject positions to “cope” with these new, harsher demands (p.675).

Third, “Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness” evoked paranoia, guilt, discomfort and turmoil in the accounts given by both executive and non-

executive women. In the cases of, for instance, Jessie and Deborah, although there is knowingness that others are judging them by what they say and do, there remains unknowingness regarding by ‘whom’ and by ‘what’ terms, which evokes considerable paranoia and mistrust of others, and excessive anxiety regarding how one’s actions will be perceived. In the cases of Anna, Natalie and Janet, the knowingness that, if they took maternity leave, this would likely impact their future career success and workplace relations, evoked significant turmoil regarding the unknowingness of the exact detrimental implications of, for instance, opting for six rather than three months maternity leave. Reflecting on all three senses of the subject, psychoanalytically inflected scholars may suggest that drawing on such heightened imagery to symbolize, for instance, paranoia, fear and anxiety, resulting from organisational norms and practices that aggressively press upon the subject, represent psychic states in which they are out of control, “dissolving” and “breaking down into pieces”.

What was significant about the accounts given was the individualizing psycho-discursive force that emerged, constructing women as the origin of their senses. Although subjects avowed clearly the injuries they endured as a result of unfair, intensive and extensive workplace practices, they were, simultaneously, decontextualized as subjects either failed to link them explicitly to structural causes or provide a critical appraisal for their emergence. Subjects, instead, tended to feel their injuries as an individual challenge to bear or contend with. Injuries were, therefore, normalized and attributed to the self, as one’s responsibility to manage and prevent, as forms of “self-care”. For instance, in the case of Natalie, neither her knowingness of the likely adverse impact that opting for a longer period of maternity leave would have on her future career success nor the anxiety generated from the unknowingness of whether this would actually pass or if so, to what extent, was nevertheless felt as her own challenge to resolve. This resonates with broader neoliberal discourses in which failure is individualized (Burchell, 1993; Layton, 2010; Saleci, 2010).

One would typically expect that such intense discomfort would prompt the subject into a position of anger or resistance. However, across the vast majority of the accounts given by women, anger and resistance directed towards organisational norms and practices was almost completely absent. Even in situations where women challenged apparent injustices in the workplace, as explored in “Senses of Solitude” in which they were the only woman in situations, executive women embodied these challenges as battles that had to be fought alone, rather than as indicative of a broader regime working against them as ‘a woman’. Indeed, even more perniciously, was that in some cases, senses of guilt were evoked for breaking organisational norms and practices, for instance, in the cases of Anna and Natalie regarding their length of maternity of leave. The implication of “individualizing injury” tropes and senses of guilt was that they appeared to depoliticize subjects, which connects with broader research on the operation of neoliberal power (McNay, 2009). Scharff (2016), for instance, in her study of classical musicians, also found that women both repudiated injuries, as they feared losing work, and individualized them as a form of self-care. Gill (2009) also explores how precarious work in the neoliberal university registered on academics in the form of, for instance, anxiety and toxic shame, and how these became secrecies and silences, emerging only in hidden spaces near to, for example, the water fountain or as intimate exchanges between good colleagues.

This can overall be conceptualised as a “double-down” position. Firstly, subjects appeared to occupy a “down” position as they often passively endured injuries, such as anxiety and paranoia, inflicted on them by the highly pressurized and demanding workplace practices. Secondly, rather than evoking anger and resistance, subjects, instead, *doubled down* their injuries by constructing themselves as the origin of their wound – ‘I only have myself to blame for this stress’. In this way, injuries are psychically *folded over* and, therefore, felt “twice over”, as a form of self-beratement,

particularly in cases in which senses of “guilt” were evoked. Could this *doubling down* represent a fallacious attempt by subjects to “plaster” over their scrapes, bumps and bruises and foreclose, ironically, any sense of injury or vulnerability? Psychoanalytically inflected scholars may suggest that this attempt to “bandage up” wounds through the doubling down of one’s injuries could indicate an attempt by the subject to close down reflective action through the denial of the harsher realities of past events, which in turn evokes a sense of omnipotence, control and intolerance of limits.

This raises a number of important questions in light of the empirical data shared in this chapter. Are executive and non-executive women presenting themselves as the origin of their injuries as a way to embody a sense of control and omnipotence in contexts in which they have felt themselves moving into positions of dissolution and fragmentation? Does the tumultuous position of unknowingness indicate the closing down of reflective thought regarding the causes of one’s embodied fears, paranoia and anxiety? How can subjects tolerate uncertainty as a way to acquire a greater “capacity to think”, particularly in tumultuous senses of knowing-unknowingness? The data in this chapter suggests that it is psychologically easier for women to question themselves than to critique an environment that marginalizes them and which women sense. Thus, in such uncomfortable contexts, women may find comfort in a rational which positions them as both the “source” and “solution” of their problems.

In *Senses of the Subject* (2015), Butler describes the attempt to act as if subjects were a sovereign “I” and foreclose their formation as a “thoroughly brittle” and breakable position (p.8). For Butler (2015), senses of the self are not primary and, thus, do not register prior to the formation of thoughts. She argues instead that, “a norm may be said to precede us, to circulate in the world before it touches upon us” which opens up an “affective register” (p.5). Butler explains that the subject sometimes has to

understand itself as a source of its own actions in order to think of itself as agentic. Therefore, when a subject gives an account of its formation, it does not “fall away” after a break or rupture in its biography, as it is so often constructed, but continues to install the subject in the here and now (p.6).

Conclusion

This chapter has extended existing Foucaudian inspired scholarship on neoliberalism (Brown, 2003; Rose, 1992) through understanding of how it is lived out at the subject-level. The chapter has done this by exploring the psychic reality of the subject and how, for instance, neoliberalism is embodied and registered emotionally by subjects in the finance and account sector. The chapter has identified how important psychic states, such as paranoia, anxiety, guilt and fear, are evoked from problematic organisational norms and practices, such as extensive and intensive work, the demand to be mobile, and ‘oppressive’ inter-relational ties. The chapter has, in turn, threaded these psychic states together to reflect broader senses of the subject and mapped these back to broader, neoliberal psycho-discursive dynamics. Thus, the chapter overall extends similar psychoanalytically inflected studies by Gill (2009) and Scharff (2016) on how subjects are constituted from the ground-up, without pathologising or individualizing their experiences.

The chapter has identified three key senses of the subject. Firstly, “Senses of Precariousness” pertained to the psychic states of suffocation, powerlessness and uncontrollability and were evoked by chronic working hours, commercial pressures and scrutiny. Secondly, “Senses of Solitude” linked to psychic states of loneliness in which women were unable to forge meaningful relationships with other women due to the highly competitive and individualistic organisational norms. Thirdly, “Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness” linked to psychic states of paranoia, guilt and discomfort and were evoked principally from the unknowingness of women, for

instance, to confide or trust others at work, how others perceived them, and whether taking maternity leave would adversely impact their future career success and inter-relational ties.

The central contribution of this paper was to show the individualising force behind the different senses of the subject. In other words, it has been argued that despite avowing their injuries, the majority of women, however, felt these senses as their own challenge to bear, contend with, manage or prevent, as forms of “self-care”. In some cases, worryingly, this individualising thrust appeared to evoke senses of guilt in women who felt ‘bad’ for ‘breaking’ organisational protocol. The chapter has conceptualised this as a “double down” position as women not only passively endured the challenges inflicted upon them by unfair organisational practices, but simultaneously doubled down on the feeling, self-berating themselves, for what had bumped up against them. The chapter suggests that this *doubling down* may represent a fallacious attempt by subjects to “plaster” over their scrapes, bumps and bruises and, ironically foreclose their injuries which, in turn, may evoke a sense of omnipotence and control in contexts of precariousness, solitude and unknowingness. However, the subject may think of itself as the source of its own senses but these norms instead precede the subject, impressing upon them, and opening up an affective register. Therefore, senses of omnipotence or the “I” are in reality senses of norms that emerge from the institutions and inter-relational ties within which the subject is formed and by which one continues to be installed.

Chapter Seven

Giving an account of oneself

In Chapter 2, I explained how there is a large body of Foucauldian inspired feminist scholarship on the constitution of subjectivities under neoliberalism. However, much of this literature presents subjects as static and assumes they are complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. There has been very little research tracing alternative positions that can emerge under neoliberalism. This article explores the oscillations in the accounts given by neoliberal subjects. Despite women defending neoliberal positions, experiences of violence and vulnerability in the hands of significant others in organisations, expose the fallacious sense of subjects as individualistic and autonomous in organisations. This chapter responds to the third question raised in Chapter Three regarding the psycho-discursive dynamics involved in the defence of narcissistically invested positions, and the take up of alternative, more ethically responsible positions, which I term, “capacities to care”.

Ethics in management is going through something of a renaissance as a response to the significant corporate scandals that have shaken the business world to its very core over recent years (Clegg et al., 2007). Scholars and practitioners have primarily responded by offering macro-level solutions, such as systems of rules, codes and administrative procedures, which ignore the mundane ways in which individuals deliberate and are challenged by ethical dilemmas in organisations (Mcmurray et al., 2016). As Clegg and Rhodes (2006) explain, ‘prescriptive, normative regulations are insufficient to provide an ethical framework for organisations to operate within’ (p.5), as they turn morality into something procedural and, thus, deny the individual subject the right to moral judgment. There have more recently

been calls by scholars to explore, instead, how ethics are embodied, lived out and experienced individually and inter-relationally within organisations (Knights, 2016; Pullen and Rhodes, 2013).

I seek to respond to this call on how scholars can move forward discussions on organisational ethics towards embodiment and lived experiences through the exploration of ethical vicissitudes of neoliberal subjects. This is important to address, as there is an assumption in the literature that subjects are static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. I explore how responsibility for the other can paradoxically emerge in response to experiences of violence and vulnerability in the workplace and the psychic affects evoked. The central contribution of this chapter is that such experiences can enable some women to *move away* from an individualistic, self-autonomous and narcissistically invested position *towards* a self-less capacity to care for others. The chapter therefore adds to the increasing interest in bringing together feminism and psychoanalysis in the study of inter and intra-gender subjectivities in organisations (Fotaki et al., 2012; Mavin and Grandy, 2016; Tyler and Cohen, 2010; Vachhani, 2012).

In the first section of the chapter, I explore how both executive and non-executive women recognise gender parity but work discursively to elide its association with unfair organisational systems. For instance, the women create *psychic distance* and *turn in on* the self, as a means to redirect ownership and responsibility for inequalities *onto* the self. In the second section, I explore how executive women appeared to defend individualistic positions through the projection of blame *onto* less successful women for the persistence of gender parity. This was rationalized as poor career decision-making in the context of apparent multiple career options, choices and routes to success, which executive women claim to have successfully navigated. In the third section, I reflect on how these defensive positions were contradicted by stories and events regarding broken attachments with others in the workplace. I attempt to show how despite positions of

vulnerability, some of the women were able to use this experience to reflect on their own capacity to deflect persecution and, therefore, *move* towards more responsible positions in relations to others.

Repudiation and Individualisation

The majority of executive and non-executive women recognized the persistence of gender inequality in the finance and accounting sector, particularly the under-representation of women at senior levels in organisations. However, they often failed to provide a critical rationalization for gender equality. The women instead drew on interpretative repertoires that were highly fragmented and contradictory. In response to neoliberal socio-economic forces in the workplace, the overall function of these interpretative repertoires were to repudiate inequality whilst furnishing a psychic reality in which subjects took on full responsibility for inequalities. The account, for instance, by Stella, an executive in a big four accounting firm, exemplifies how many of the interpretative repertoires were structured:

Stella (Executive): I think men and women are equal... are they equal in the workplace, I think it depends on where they work, and I think it depends on what they do ...in terms of pay ...it's very much a meritocracy, and we've worked very hard to make sure there is unconscious biases stamped out around pay and promotion... But sometimes individual's personal circumstances and that could be male as well as female, means that they are not always able to take advantage of the same opportunities, but as long as it's down to an individual choice I don't see that as an inequality, it's the choices, or where the opportunities are made, that's where the inequality comes in.

The overall function of the interpretative repertoire by Stella was two-fold: firstly, in the opening, Stella assumes a 'progressive position' by affirming her belief in equality and that men and women 'are the same'. However, the repertoire shifts and Stella attempts to repudiate inequality by describing the efforts of her organisation to correct structural inequality such as pay, despite concluding the repertoire with the admission that her organisation still had a gender pay gap. By drawing on neoliberal rhetoric regarding the 'meritocratic organisation', Stella works to individualise inequalities as emerging from the actions and decisions of individuals rather than, for instance, the unfair remunerative systems in her organisation, which have resulted in the gender pay gap.

Jackie, an executive in an investment bank, repudiates the idea that there are different demands placed on women with regards to self-presentation in the workplace:

Jackie (Executive): I think it matters that you look professional whether you're a man or a woman, except for dress down on Fridays ...so I think you need to look professional. I think you have to be ... part of the presentation is also to be well prepared for meetings ...if you're well prepared, then you're more confident about your meeting, you've done your homework. So whoever you are I think you need to have thought about that and to be dressed appropriately, give the right impression.

The repertoire draws on the idea of the gender-neutral 'professional' body. Jackie explains that as long as one is professional and, therefore, 'confident' and 'prepared' one will 'give the right impression' to others. However, Jackie fails to recognise how ideas surrounding the 'professional' are shaped in image of the masculine norm, and how this image works to render others, including women, abject in the workplace.

For many women, recognising their own ‘down’ position in the workplace was challenging. In the case of Deborah, an executive in a multi-national investment bank, she commences the interpretative repertoire by suggesting that there is no difference between men and women in terms of equality in the workplace. However, as the interpretative repertoire unfolds, she begins to describe the masculine nature of her workplace:

Deborah (Executive): ...I don’t necessarily view men as separate from women. I think people aren’t equal ...So, are men better than women, no but some of those silos are quite strong ...I went to a meeting last week, and there were eight references to sports, it was a US group over here ...ya know ‘gotta move the puff, gotta move the goal, but up to back’, and that’s fine, some of that’s ya know just American culture, but there was no women ...I spoke to the head guy about it, we talked a little bit about it, and he was like ‘it’s a total locker room, ya know’”.

Despite disavowing gender discrimination at the start of the repertoire, Deborah explains that ‘silos’ exist in which masculine norms are sustained through metaphors and analogies reminiscent of a sports ‘locker room’.

Another common feature of the interpretative repertoires employed by women in the profession was to essentialise gender. Judy, for instance, explains that it is ‘easy’ to feel left out and how this tends to be a “female thing”:

Darren: Have you found yourself in a situation at work where you have been left out or felt like you’ve been left out?

Judy (Executive): ...there’s a number of different situations and when perhaps you feel you’re not involved, maybe at the heart of decision-making about stuff, or if you have to make a job role change and that changes the way you interact with people. ...I

think it's quite a female thing often to feel left out - I don't think my bosses worry about it anywhere near as much. But I think everybody wants to feel included and the reality is sometimes when you're making decisions on stuff, it's easy to feel left out.

The function of the interpretative repertoire is to construct women as irrational for feeling left out, which problematizes the 'validity' of experiences of inequality in the workplace. Judy concludes the repertoire by affirming, "everyone wants to feel included", which disassociates women from exclusion by suggesting that everyone can feel left out and, therefore, the experiences of women are not unique or, moreover, valid.

In the case of Abby, a non-executive, she states that there are no differences between men and women in how they present themselves at workplace:

Darren: Do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the workplace?

Abby (Non-Executive): How you present yourself? Not really, I don't think it does. I think men and women are quite different people, and I don't know if this is like a further question but I think the way men and women behave it's quite different, and I think that impacts how people are perceived...

The function of the interpretative repertoire is two-fold: firstly, it essentialises the performance of masculinity and femininity as binary opposites and natural; and secondly, it suggests that women are not interpellated differently to men, which works to remove inequalities placed on women.

Both executive and non-executive women appeared to redirect ownership and responsibility for inequalities *onto* the self. This appeared to support the individualistic and competitive social forces of neoliberalism. The function of the interpretative repertoires were to create 'psychic distance' with the self and, in turn, enable the subject to *turn in on* the self:

Joanne (Executive): I've always held myself back ...before going off on maternity leave I had ... I wasn't happy in my job, but I couldn't leave because I thought gosh, I'm trying for a child, and so I held myself back ...there's no reason why I couldn't have left and started a new role somewhere else and begun the process but I felt that I couldn't start in a new company and let them down by not being there...

Joanne, an executive at a multinational investment bank, explains that, during her career, she had always 'held herself back'. She describes how she wanted to leave her organisation at the same as trying for her first child. However, she does not question the reason *why* she felt uncomfortable for potentially taking maternity leave in a new organisation. Instead, Joanne appears to individualise these responsibilities as her own fault or inadequacy.

In the case of Lauren, an executive at a multi-national investment bank, she explains that on a project in India she was accused of not engaging with her colleagues, despite feeling how they had not made the effort to include her as a new member of the team:

Lauren (Executive): I remember having a management meeting and everyone saying, well, 'you're not very engaged, you don't link into the group', and I was like, 'I'm the ex-pat, I've joined here, I come out to your socials, but you don't really talk to me, bring me in. You all know each other, you're all men' ...I think

they felt I had to do the bridge all the way over to them, there was no coming over to me, and I felt very excluded there ...I felt extremely isolated in that time. ...I think I've worked harder in the last few years to say, well, you know, if you feel excluded, why do you feel excluded, I'm quite, actually, quite an insular person myself ...if I've felt excluded in the past it's probably because it's me

Despite recognizing that her new colleagues had made little effort to include her, Lauren nevertheless attempts to redirect the responsibility for her exclusion *onto* the self. She rationalizes that 'should have instead worked harder' to engage and link in with them.

Projection and Self-Autonomy

Many of the women executives recognised that women were generally underrepresented in the finance and accounting sector. The accounts given can be conceptualised as 'down' or 'flat', as they often assumed defensive positions when discussing why women continued to be under-represented in the sector. In particular, these defensive positions were often accompanied by projective dynamics in which they sought to blame less successful women for the under-representation of women, especially at senior levels. The women rationalised this as poor career decision-making in the context of apparent multiple career options, choices and routes to success, which they claimed to have successfully navigated. Projective dynamics appeared, therefore, to enable women to embody psycho-discursively neoliberal positions of self-autonomy and 'doing the right thing' in organisations to achieve success:

Sharon (Senior Executive): And I think if you're professional, it's not gonna work all the time, but you actually... I think many

could do better, and it's back to coaching and mentoring, and not making excuses, because there are many of us who just made it work, and it's just making it work, rather than saying well 'there's a ceiling there' and I'm', ya know, that's my excuse, it's getting beyond the excuses''.

The account given by Sharon was viscerally imbued with frustration regarding the lack of support she had received during her long career. Rather than 'making up excuses', Sharon argues that if women receive the right support, through coaching and mentoring, they can 'get beyond their excuses' and 'make it work' as she did.

Kim, an executive at a mid-tier accounting firm, despite taking very short maternity leave and working long days and weekends, appears to lay culpability for women not thinking they 'can not do more than one thing', which she suggests is the result of 'social conditioning' and unconscious biases:

Kim (Executive): ...I don't think, I can't say I've ever been held back because of my gender, ever. I think a lot of women make choices, or they make false choices, they think they can't do more than one thing, and maybe that's society and conditioning and I think that has to change over time, and I think there's unconscious bias, and I even do it... I think it's the way we've been brought up and the way people think

The implication of the interpretative repertoire by Kim is to construct women as having internalized gender. Gender is, thus, understood as 'internal' to subjects. If challenges related to gender emerge in the workplace, they are understood as the result of individual actions rather than the outcome of unfair structures and cultures in organisations.

Stella (Senior Executive): I think women tend to go for their feet, and then they tend to move away from the profession on the basis that they can't see their career path all the way through in exactly the same way as I did, I had the view I couldn't be partner, and I've got it. I think there's a lot more to be done around enabling women to understand that they cannot have it all, but that they can have the opportunity to have a very fulfilling career on the side... but there are choices to be made, and I think we need to help them in making choices.

Stella, a senior executive at a big four accounting firm, explains that less senior women, similar to herself, 'cannot see their career path to partner level'. She explains that 'there are choices to be made' and more has to be done to enable women to understand these choices in order to make better decisions regarding their career.

Despite recognising that men were more likely to be promoted than women, Caillin, an executive at global investment bank, recommends that women do not raise concerns regarding discrimination. Instead she recommends that women work even harder to achieve success:

Caillin (Executive): ...It's a little bit like when you're at this race and you need to jump hurdle it's every little hurdle is maybe a centimetre higher so the men have the one metre we have the one metre you know plus one 101 centimetres and it's always a little bit harder, in some ways a little bit harder and you can get frustrated by that and say 'oh my god why is my hurdle 101 and the guy's 100' or you can just say 'it's 101' you know just train harder and keep going and you're going to keep going and that's it and you know it's satisfying because when you make it to the top you know it's like wow I've made it ...for a woman to be successful you just need to keep working very hard and never give up and when things don't go well take it with humour and keep going

Caillin draws on the analogy of a hurdle race to conceptualise gender inequality, and how hurdles are slightly taller for women to jump over than men. However, rather than examining these hurdles and seeking to challenge them, Caillin argues that women have to train and work harder in order to overcome them and reach their goals. Even when things “don’t go well”, by which we can presume they experience discrimination, the women should “take it with humour”, which implies ignoring it.

The trope of ‘personal choice’, in parallel, appeared to frame the psychic reality of non-executive women who employ it as a way to explain away inequalities as their personal choice, for instance, to prioritise their familiars over their career advancement. Neoliberal notions of self-autonomy work to undo gender inequality in the workplace through undermining the potential for collective action through unions, feminist or broader equality movements. Whereas executive women externalize realities that women do not make the right choices, the trope of ‘personal choice’ appears to furnish the psychic reality of non-executive women:

Flora (Non-Executive) ...if you look at the people that I know, all the females who are partners, they’re very driven people who put their careers first ...whereas with others you sort of maybe get stuck at senior manager level or the level above, they’ve made a choice to prioritise and rightly so, their family over a role but that does hamper them because they’re not driving themselves as hard ...I think it will change ...there must be a way to do it. I think it’s just being creative with how you do it; a lot of it I think is just personal drive...

Flora, a non-executive in a mid-tier account firm, explains that the reason why women partners are successful is that they have prioritized their work, whereas those women further down the organisation are prioritizing their family life. However, towards the end of the trope she explains that this depends of one’s creativity and drive.

Similar to Flora, Vanessa, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, argues that others in the organisation need to realize that people made choices regarding their careers:

Vanessa (Non-Executive): ...They [people] only look and see what they think they can see, as opposed to actually I am looking at an individual who has made a personal choice, and they're striking a balance that works for them ...and were all different on that. But I do think it's important that as a female in our profession that I stand out and be really open to say this is the choice I've made, and this is why I've made it, you know because that's what I wanted to do and that's what worked for my family and I. Equally by the way I think that's true of men as well now ...it's so easy to focus on the family side of it but actually it's broader than that ...and I do think it's really important that we all respect each other's choices on that path.

Vanessa suggests that she wants to defend this position publically as a way to show other women the importance of personal choice, and disrupt alternative perceptions, perhaps those that raise questions regarding gender discrimination in the workplace. Anna, a non-executive accountant in the public sector, gives an account of a male colleague at her level who is recognised by senior partners more frequently than her with short, more strategic projects which were highly sort after and perceived as more career enhancing. However, despite Anna evaluating him and her as two of the best performers within their cohort, Anna was regularly put on long-term financial projects, which were perceived as less advantageous for promotion and development:

Anna (Non-Executive): ...I know I have a tendency to just get caught up in things and just kind of enjoy it and forget to pick my head up and say, 'look Anna, you know, where you're going?' I think that's just probably my trait and I'm conscious that I need to

take, ensure that ... the ownership of my career is down to me and
I need to do something about it

After trying to change the situation with the senior partners, Anna decides to take ‘ownership’ of her own career and apply for other external jobs. However, Anna does not recognise the potential gender implications of situation.

Vulnerability, Melancholia and the Capacity to Care

A common feature of the interpretative repertoires drawn on by executive women concerned vulnerability resulting from the experience of violence in the hands of others in the workplace. This aspect of their interpretative repertoires contradicts dominant psycho-discursive processes in neoliberalism discussed in the previous sections. I was surprised by this outcome as there appeared to be no reason why executive women would position themselves as vulnerable and, thus, disrupt their individualized and defensive accounts within the highly corporate and professional settings in which they worked. Instead, the melancholic accounts of broken attachments with others appeared viscerally imbued and showed their inter-subjective dependencies on others.

Despite assuming the projection position in other parts of her account, when the researcher asked Kim ‘who had supported her career’, she responded that she could think of more occasions when she had felt “let down” by others. Kim describes a strong relationship she had with another male senior partner, who had left the organisation and, subsequently, became one her clients:

Kim (Executive): I can more easily think of times when I was let down ... so he became the client and I became the tax partner, and he was the worst client I'd ever had in my life, it was a nightmare ...because he knew ...how things worked internally he knew what levers to ...in retrospect I know why ...because he was being put under a lot of pressure to cut our costs ...but it was, as a new partner that was a really hard thing to deal with and it felt, I knew it wasn't personal, at the time it felt like a betrayal of, of what had been a really strong relationship

Although Kim attempts to disavow her connection on the partner she considered to be a close friend as 'not personal', she contradicts herself by describing how the once strong relationship became 'a betrayal'. Thus, the sense of betrayal reflects the expectations and dependency she once had on him, and the pain she later endured after he broke the their attachment.

Jane, an executive at a mid-tier firm, had recently given her notice into the other partners, as she had been offered a new role at a different organisation. However, expecting support from her long-standing colleagues, she emotionally describes the 'destruction' of these relationships with partners and her mistreatment:

Jane (Executive): ...you build trust and what have you... and they're destroyed in just like that because I've said to them ...I kinda don't wanna work here anymore for all of these reasons, I've been given this great opportunity, it's you know, a no-brainer ...and surely they all understand that?', but then you get into this gardner leave stuff, and the 'tone' of the correspondence changes ...and you suddenly feel like, 'oh my gosh, you know, I thought these people were kinda people that I'd been in partnership with, and had a relationship with, and suddenly all the s***'s gonna... and they don't treat you like a human being, it's just like, 'you're a leaver, out the door!'...

Jane described how she felt uncomfortable being in the office that day and had, consequently, organized other meetings at outside venues. She explained that there was one particular male colleague who made her nervous, and had been aggressive towards her on several occasions, despite her attempts to correct his behaviour:

Jane (Executive): ...but if you're direct and it's a little bit malicious, and goading, and a bit, dare I say it, bullying, pushy, that's not right, and I've been in meetings where [pause] I've felt so backed into a corner I've had no way out but to sort of act like a child, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry' ...that sort of behaviour ...when you move from that, parent, from adult to adult conversation and you get into that parent-child dynamic, and I don't mean petulant child, but where, where somebody's sort of tell, tell, tell, so the child's sort of in fear...

The interpretative repertoire is littered with heightened imagery to describe what appears to have been, by all accounts, a distressing exchange with an aggressive colleague. Jane draws on the metaphor of being 'backed into a corner' during the exchange, which evokes feeling of immovability, constraint and silencing. Jane also employs the analogy of what she terms a 'child-parent dynamic', in which the parent is shouting at the child to the extent that the child is in "fear" and panic, and cannot move.

In some cases, as a result of experiences of violence at the hands of others, some executive women appeared to move surprisingly 'towards' a concern for others. These discursive repertoires were littered with heightened imagery, which symbolized a self-less desire to 'redirect' the violence that one had endured from others. These investments were viscerally imbued and continued to shape their subjectivities, and provided counter investments within highly individualized, neoliberal settings.

For instance, Deborah is a senior executive in a large multi-national investment bank who movingly recounted the fear and suffering she had endured throughout much of her career at the hands of an aggressive and intimidating boss:

Deborah: I have a boss who yells and bullies and I'm a woman in my forties and I still break out in a sweat when I need to call my boss, and he yells and bullies me still to this day. And ...it's on me for some reason, and I irritate him, and I don't irritate many people, I irritate myself and him the most, and maybe my husband sometimes...

Interviewer: What do you do then when he shouts?

Deborah: I use to shout back, I use to get angry because it's, he does it to everyone, but he sees a weakness in people, and he just destroys them... I 'yes' him now, and just shut down and say 'you're right', 'you're right'.

She described how in the face of this aggression she “just shut[s] down” as she doesn't “know what to say”. Although she attempted to counter this by ‘shouting back’ and ‘getting angry’, she now appeases him by ‘yessing him’. However, Deborah described how this violence has shaped her interactions with others, which represents a *turning away* from the self and *towards* others:

Deborah: ...but it makes you realise how you should handle yourself when you're managing people and managing problems ...everyone else then kinda adapts that kinda behaviour and it kinda spoils the pool a little bit.

Interviewer: What do you do differently as a result of that?

Deborah: ...I mean a little bit you're a little bit on guard if everyone is kinda throwing everybody under the bus in the United States. So on the one hand, you're guarded, you're more thoughtful about what you say and what you don't say, erm, and I

tend to then kinda go away, ya know, so that's probably my way of, ya know, extract myself to, as opposed to gettin' on in and drivin' ahead.

Deborah describes how her experiences of workplace violence have 'made her realise how one should handle themselves with others', which indicates a cognizant redirection of violence away from the other as a result of what she has endured at the hands of her boss. Deborah draws on heightened imagery to symbolise the sense of pace, uncontrollability and brutality of violence on others in the workplace. In circumstances where colleagues are "throwing everybody under the bus", she explains how she breaks the violence by 'extracting' herself from the situation, as opposed to "gettin' on in and drivin' ahead", which symbolises the frantic-violent actions of others.

Linda similarly described how a boss bullied her in a previous organisation. She recounted how, whilst on sick leave following an operation, she had received phone calls from her boss telling her that the organisation was reconsidering her position. Linda found this stressful and decided to return to work, despite still in recovery following her operation. Upon her return, she encountered a hostile boss who refused to engage with her and separated her from the team:

Linda: I think I was, you know, I don't like bullying and the one thing that I was determined not to do was to pass that bullying down to my team. So, however s*** I might have been at managing them which, you know, the environment was crap for that anyway, and I wasn't a great manager to be honest, I wasn't, at least I didn't bully them and I'm sure they can be grateful for that because it's not nice.

Interviewer: How did you manage not to pass on that bullying as you said?

Linda: ...I'm not saying I never bullied anyone, I'm rather afraid I probably have but when I was confronted with that it felt

horrible, it was really stressful and I felt that she was in the wrong and I felt that I would be determined not to do that because it's not how I behave. It's not how I like to be treated and I'm not going to treat someone else in a way that I wouldn't like myself. So it was that that stopped me...

The extract can be described as ambivalent as Linda acknowledges that, although she may not have been an effective leader of her team and that she may have even bullied in the past, she was, however, 'determined not to pass this bullying' *onto* her team. She explains that the experience "felt horrible" and she was "determined not to do that" to her team. This ambivalent position enables Linda to realise her own potential to 'destroy' others in the workplace, which opens up the chance to control her violent impulses.

Lauren, an executive in a multinational investment bank, recognises that women experience greater scrutiny for what they wear in the workplace and how it is wrong to judge women by how they dress. However, Lauren acknowledges that she does sometimes judge other women by what they wear:

Lauren: I'm not a real big fan of people wearing kind of sandals to interviews, and I've interviewed women where, you know, kind of most of their bra straps are showing, I just find it sloppy, I don't know ...I don't really like very, very heavily made up women, ...I just don't think it's necessary in the workplace ...when it's in an interview situation, and somebody will come in very heavily made up, false eye lashes, something like that, it makes me ...I sort of, it creates an initial impression and that's awful really. I'm kind of even ashamed that that's what I do, but I look at it and it creates a certain impression. So I think women do that all the time, and having said that, I've got friends who wear all sorts of things and, you know, dress in different ways, and I actually find it quite refreshing, you know, that you'll see legs just wandering round in

flat, you know, no heels and sort of, you know, relatively comfortably dressed and things like that.

Lauren details a number of ways that women can dress which can create a negative impression, including showing ‘bra straps’, wearing a lot of make up or fake eye lashes. However, she describes her perspectives as “awful really” and how she feels “ashamed” for expressing them. This appears to represent a sense of guilt for what she has said, which leads to a move *towards* a concern for the implications of what one says about others. As a result, the interpretative repertoire shifts sharply as Lauren acknowledges that she has friends that dress in the ways she has just negatively described, and how she ‘actually finds it refreshing’. Unlike the previous examples in this section, which show shifts towards the other tropologically, the example of Lauren shows how psycho-discursive vicissitudes can occur within individual interpretative repertoires.

This is not to suggest that men and non-executive women did not demonstrate a sense of responsibility for others but that the ‘quality’ of care appeared markedly different from the aforementioned accounts expressed by some executive women. Their positions, in particular, appeared trapped within a neoliberal paradigm and, thus, ran the risk of buttressing further gender inequality in the workplace. These positions can, instead, be conceptualised as *leanings* rather than complete discursive shifts towards a self-less concern for others. Cara, for instance, a non-executive in a mid-tier accounting firm, explains some of the changes that organisations could make to improve gender inequality:

Darren: ...you spoke about focusing in on gender, I mean what could some of those changes that they could implement be?

Cara (Non-Executive): I think just saying. I think it’s just communication, just accepting and letting everybody know that this is something that we don’t think is acceptable really and that I think

in a way is enough because people at different levels will then find a way to move that forward. But I don't feel that we've got the top line support to do it, so if that was a top line support, I would finally tell people in my office, think about leaning groups or whatever but and it's not that I think people wouldn't want me to do it, I just think that you know, an unequivocal statement as to...

Cara describes how her organisation should make a clear statement of intent to improve gender inequality. However, Cara suggests that she would then be able to establish initiatives to support women within the organisation, such as 'lean in groups'. The idea that women should 'lean in' at work emerges from the book 'Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead' by Sandberg (2013), and attempts to empower women to have the individual self 'will' to climb the corporate ladder. Thus, the book attempts to individualise responsibility for change, which breaks down attempts at solidarity in the workplace, and fails to challenge unfair systems and cultures in organisations. There is little doubt that Cara wants gender equality for women, however, her response to this in terms of 'lean in' groups and workshops would only retrench neoliberal ideologies regarding individual responsibility and would unlikely resolve challenges to gender equality.

Brenda, a non-executive who had recently left the investment banking profession, describes similarly her ambitions for a women's networking group that she had recently established:

Darren: Brilliant, what are you hoping to achieve with the network?

Brenda (Non-Executive): A mixture of ... a lot of networks just want to connect people and do professional development with women... I want to do a mixture of both, like raise awareness, cultivate the pipeline - you're not going to get women onto the board if you don't have any graduates coming in because no one's hiring them or they're too scared to apply. I understand from the

statistics for like female applicants to investments is zero. I mean, that's not going to work, that's not good for the global economy, you're going to end up with another credit crunch, because you've got a load of bullish men, if you look at the states for female fund managers I think it's only about 7% of fund managers are women, if you look at their numbers over the men's in terms of their return, the volatility of their funds, the alpha they produce, they're a lot higher, they're top quarter - that's because of our, kind of, women's kind of risk averseness and our ability to sit back and to consider before we push the button. Those are actual traits that help in this environment and in this industry.

The account by Brenda describes the different aims of her network group, including how it would help organisations improve their pipeline of women talent. Brenda rationalizes this by drawing on neoliberal ideologies regarding increasing the representation of women in organisations will improve the performance of investments and funds, as they are more risk adverse than men. The use of economic rationales renders women as corporate assets and, thus, subordinates social justice arguments on gender equality.

The empirical sections have highlighted a number of important connections between how broader neoliberal discourses shape individual and shared subjectivities particularly through movements in discourse, for instance, how inequalities are *turned back on* the self. However, I have also tried to show how 'neoliberal' accounts are entangled with stories of dependency and broken attachments on others, and how such experiences can, paradoxically, delineate the interconnections that subjects share with others.

Discussion

The aim of this chapter was to move discussions on organisational ethics towards an exploration of the ethical vicissitudes of subjects. This is important to address, as there is an assumption in existing literature that

subjects are static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. I explore how responsibility for the other can emerge paradoxically in response to experiences of violence and vulnerability in the workplace. The central contribution of this chapter is that such experiences enable subjects to *move away* from an individualistic, self-autonomous and narcissistically invested position *towards* a self-less capacity to care for others. This contributes to debates on the need to understand organisational ethics through embodiment and lived experiences.

Although the first two empirical sections chime with much of the existing literature on neoliberalism and gender, I have attempted to extend this by rendering the analysis psychosocial through identifying the ‘movement’ and ‘direction’ of discourse. Of course, in comparison to similar works in media studies, this research analyses these issues within the context of finance and accounting. Three main psycho-discursive dynamics were identified. First, although the majority of executive and non-executive women recognised gender parity in the sector, they often failed to provide a critical rationalization for its persistence. The women drew on interpretative repertoires that functioned to repudiate inequality and redirect the responsibility for change *onto* the individual ‘self’ rather than critiquing and challenging broader structural and cultural constraints to equality. These psycho-dynamics link to broader neoliberal discourses, which work to deflect attention from broader systems of inequality and individualise problems as belonging to the self. Second, the accounts given by executive women appeared particularly ‘flat’ or ‘down’ as they vigorously defended such individualistic positions through redirecting blame *onto* less successful women for the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace. This appeared to enable the women to embody neoliberal ideas around self-autonomy and ‘doing the right thing’ in order to be achieve success at work. The women rationalised this as poor career decision-making in the context of apparent multiple career options, choices and routes to success, which they claimed to have successfully navigated. Third, whereas executive women externalise realities that women do not make the right choices, the trope of ‘personal choice’ furnished the psychic reality of non-executive

women. The trope functioned to explain away decisions as belonging to the self rather than as choices that had to be made in the context of unfair systems at work. This trope links to broader neoliberal discourses of self-autonomy and independence which function to undo gender inequality in the workplace through undermining the potential for collective action.

I describe the overall function of these psycho-discursive dynamics as “narcissistically invested, down-up” investments. Despite recognising the persistence of inequality, the women appeared to restore a sense of knowing and viability in the workplace through defending neoliberal ideas on ‘meritocracies’ and ‘self-autonomy’, and essentialising gender as a way to negate the impact of structural constraints. The apparent move by executive women to blame other women for the persistence of gender inequality could indirectly indicate attempts to militate against a sense of solidarity and responsibility for the other. Psychoanalytically inflected researchers might suggest that it is psychically easier to defend such investments than to experience affects such as ‘guilt’, which may prompt subjects towards positions of care in the workplace. I have advanced, therefore, the works of Mavin and Grandy (2016) and Sullivan and Delaney (2016) who explore how neoliberal discourses and embodiment can silence critiques of social, cultural and economic inequalities, and how this can result in silencing and intra-gender abjection amongst women.

I describe those accounts with a higher constellation of ‘down’ investments as ‘flat’ and lacking ‘depth’. The accounts given by, for instance, Jackie and Judy, fitted this description well, as they contained a higher concentration of individualistic and self-autonomous positions and rarely touched on feelings or thoughts that reflected the complexity and hardship of working in such highly competitive and unfair organisations. However, I suggest that there appears to be advantages to ‘trying down’, as seen in the case of Caillin, which could be conceptualised as having a flip ‘up’ side, as by not disrupting the coherence of the workplace, the women were able to keep

opportunities open, albeit less likely compared to their male counterparts. In this sense, the “down-up” position could be conceptualised as ‘narcissistic’ as it works overall to counter-solidarity in the pursuit of individual gains in the workplace.

Despite defending narcissistically invested positions the accounts given by women were often shaped tropologically by melancholic stories of broken attachments. Although the women sought to present themselves as autonomous and individualistic, in line with broader neoliberal psycho-discursive dynamics, tropologically their accounts revealed the importance of others, and therefore, how they were not as ‘self-contained’ as perhaps they attempted to construct themselves as discursively. Butler (2001, 2005) argues that the demand to give an account of oneself fundamentally problematizes the self-narrating “I”. The disorientated accounts given by executive women and their association with the events, stories and discourses of important inter-subjective relations, reveals how the “I” is constructed in relation *to* and *of* others.

Whereas much of the literature exploring neoliberalism and gender presents subjects as somewhat ‘static’ and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberal socio-economic rationales, this chapter has shown how in some cases, inter-subjective relations enabled women *to move away* from narcissistically invested positions *towards* a greater ethical concern for the other, what I term ‘the capacity to care’. The capacity to care exhibited three key features: first, there was a determination to *redirect* violence and destructive impulses *away* from the other; second, participants drew on heightened imagery to symbolize their attempts to break violent acts inflicted on them and others; third, in contrast to tropological oscillations, I also identified vicissitudes within individual interpretative repertoires, as subjects felt ‘guilt’ for expressing ideas which they later realized had the capacity to harm. These positions could be described as “ambivalent” as subjects were aware of how this violence felt and acknowledged their own capacity to inflict it on

others. Butler (2009a) explains that it is precisely as we are formed in a “...mired of violence” that “...the possibility of non-violence” opens up (p.171). Butler explains that if one attempts to disavow violence, they run the risk of morally legitimising it and relocating their persecution *onto* the other, and denying, in turn, the injury they have inflicted. However, she explains that the avowel of violence enables the individual to reshape their rage and potential destruction in ways that protect precarious lives. Thus, the three types of oscillations outlined reflect efforts by the women to modify their anger and aggression to protect others.

This is not to suggest that non-executive women did not express care but that the ‘quality’ of their accounts was markedly different from that of some executive women. For instance, their accounts appeared trapped within a neoliberal paradigm or were unable to acknowledge how particular events may have been unfair or discriminatory. Perhaps their relative power, agency or longer experience gifts some executive women with the privilege of being able to locate temporally and therefore comprehend fully, as some psychoanalytically inflected scholars might argue, the events and people that have touched them.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on empirical data to connect broader neoliberal discourses with psycho-discursive dynamics at the subject-level. The analysis has shown how, for instance, executive and non-executive women defend positions such as personal choice and self-autonomy, and how they *turn in on* the self as a way to explain away structural inequalities in the workplace. The first part of the chapter chimes with much of the existing literature, particularly in media studies, but I have also attempted to extend this by rendering the analysis psychosocial through identifying the movement or direction of discourse. The chapter has also made a

contribution to our existing understanding of neoliberal subjects in two ways. First, despite the abundance of narcissistically invested positions, by returning to the individual accounts of participants, I was also able to trace alternative counter-constellational positions. These positions centred on experiences of vulnerability and violence, often at the hands of others in the workplace. Second, I was able to show how experiences of vulnerability can prompt the subject to move, paradoxically, *towards* the capacity to care. This is not to suggest that neoliberal discourses have not profoundly and adversely impacted subjects in the workplace, damaging inter-relational ties and increasing anxiety, but that alternative and arguably more ethical positions can still emerge within neoliberalism.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion: Mapping the Constellational Positions of the Neoliberal Subject

There is something of a lacuna of research exploring the gendered and psychosocial experiences of organisational life in accounting and finance. This research set out to explore the connections between the experiences and discourses drawn on at the subject-level and how they interconnected with broader neoliberal discourses in accounting and finance in the UK. I defined three specific research questions to address: (1) What shared frames of understanding in the workplace do men and women draw on in talk? (2) What psychic reality do these frames furnish? (3) What psycho-discursive dynamics emerge in the accounts given by men and women? I employed a multiple and single case design to explore individual and shared, or collective dynamics and, what I term, “heightened imagery” by gender in the accounting and finance sector, and their connections to broader neoliberal discourses. I was also interested in identifying and understanding states of ‘knowing-unknowingness’ at work and, for instance, senses of control or lack of control, having to do one’s best in an unknowing situation, or living with what may happen next and the unknowingness of this.

In Chapter Five, I explored shared frames of work through confidence repertoires drawn on by men and women, and how these resonated with broader neoliberal discourses or what I termed, “phallic frames” of work. I drew on the phallus to symbolize the phallic nature of confidence repertoires, as emerging from positions of dominance, power and aggression. Thus, the inter-relational construction of confidence is not

“level” but phallocentric. Within the phallic economy, women are broadly constructed as bearing a confidence deficit for not expressing qualities associated with confidence, such as aggression and narcissism. Women self-recriminate for expressing qualities disassociated with confidence, such as reflexivity, contemplation and pragmatism. Thus, confidence repertoires have a pernicious force as they, firstly, distract women from broader discriminatory norms that favour masculine behaviours and, secondly, individualise this as a form of “lack” or “deficit” for women to self-manage and improve as a way to become more confident. Whilst some women recognised the problematic nature of such behaviours that were expected of them, for instance, narcissism and aggression, they felt compelled to mimic these qualities to keep up with colleagues. The implication of this is that women indirectly construct qualities associated with masculinity as a necessary currency in exchange for success within the “phallic economy”.

In Chapter Six, I explored how neoliberalism is “sensed” at the subject-level. Thus, this chapter was concerned with how neoliberalism was registered affectively through states of paranoia, anxiety, guilt and fear, within accounting and finance. I identified three senses of the subject. First, in “Senses of Precariousness”, I explored heightened imagery drawn on to symbolise chronic workloads and hours, commercial pressures and scrutiny, which evoked senses of suffocation, powerlessness and a lack of control. Second, in “Senses of Solitude”, I explored the challenges that women faced forging meaningful relationships with others both at work and in their personal lives as a result of intensive and extensive work and individualistic organisational norms. Finally, in “Senses of Knowing-Unknowingness”, women sensed paranoia, guilt and discomfort regarding, for instance, whether they could trust others at work or whether taking maternity leave would adversely impact their future career success or relational ties. However, I argued in this chapter that rather than prompting subjects into positions of anger or resistance, subjects saw these injuries as emerging from within themselves rather than as of unfair organisational norms and practices.

In Chapter Seven, I explored the different repertoires drawn on by women to defend neoliberal positions. These repertoires functioned to repudiate inequality and redirect responsibility for change onto the self rather than critiquing and challenging broader structural and cultural constraints to equality. In addition, executive women redirected blame onto less successful women for the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace. However, I explained how these narcissistically inflected positions were juxtaposed by experiences of vulnerability in the hands of significant others in the workplace. In some instances, these experiences appeared to prompt some women towards more ethically and responsible positions, what I term the “capacity to care”, due to the injuries that they have sustained.

To summarise, the thesis has contributed to our understanding of how broader, neoliberal discourses shape the psychic life of employees in finance and accounting. This is important to explore as there has not been much scholarship regarding how subjects are constituted from the “ground-up”. Firstly, I did this through an exploration of the construction of confidence relationally within a phallic system. Secondly, the thesis has contributed to our understanding of how injuries inflicted on subjects, emerging from organisational norms and practices are registered psychically through states of paranoia, guilt and anxiety. Thus, this was a ground up view, which was then mapped back to broader discourses as a way to avoid individualising and pathologising the challenges from working under neoliberalism. Thirdly, the thesis has problematised existing assumptions in scholarship that view subjects as somewhat static or complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism through considering the emergence of counter-investments which I termed “the capacity to care”. A final contribution of the thesis has been the imbrication of discursive and psychoanalytical theories and methods. I have attempted to map throughout the thesis the complex, interrelated constellational investments that subjects move in, out and away from. By understanding the subject in such terms, I have shown how the neoliberal subject is neither homogenous nor static as

well as highlighting some of the ways in which psychoanalysis and discourse analysis can be used in conjunction with one another.

In this concluding chapter, I have begun mapping the constellational positions of the neoliberal subject in the finance and accounting sector. The subject will come to occupy a number of these positions in talk throughout an account. This is not to suggest that subjects move between them in equal measure. On the contrary, as I have alluded to elsewhere, individual subject accounts contain different concentrations of investments, which can evoke senses of the subject as “flat”, “melancholic” or “lonely”. The essence of this might be recognizable to psychoanalysts who tend to analyse and theorise individual cases. However, within the relatively short scope of this final chapter, I shall only be drawing on “collective or shared investments”. I am not belittling the importance of such case analysis. It would be interesting, for instance, to draw on collective or shared constellational positions whilst drawing on individual cases to show the operation of psycho-discursive dynamics of the individual subject. This would conserve the peculiarity and integrity of individual psych-biographies as they pertain to shared or collective investments. The positions elevated from the thesis in this chapter contain different psycho-discursive dynamics such as projection, introjection, individualization and self-recrimination. I have not separated these out. They are embedded within the positions themselves.

Phallic Positions

I argued that men had clearly defined “phallic desires”, regarding promotion and remuneration, and rarely touched on the harsher realities from their careers which contrasted sharply with the accounts given by women on aspects of vulnerability. However, I drew on some cases in which men gave accounts of their tumultuousness career-histories. These appeared to center on the pursuit of desires that they held and the adverse implications chasing

them had on their wellbeing and inter-relational ties. I argued that these cases reflect how men can indeed “have it all” in finance and accounting, wealth, power and prestige, but they did not appear to realize the potential damaging effects that pursuing the phallus could have on either themselves or others until it was too late. Psychoanalytically inflected scholars may suggest that these cases reflect men as at the mercy of the phallus, psychically “opened up” and with little control or ownership over their desires, with detrimental implications on the subject and their inter-relational bonds. This is not to suggest that men are completely passive victims of neoliberalism. They are enticed and compelled by what it offers. One may argue that men are prepared to be ‘cracked open’ in order to embody the phallus and how they expect this to entrench their power and control in other aspects of their life, for instance, their personal and amorous relationships. However, it is difficult to deny the “unilateralism” of the phallus and what it offers men at work. In other words, men (and women) are offered only one route to success at work.

What is most curious is how women often constructed and sensed men as externalizing these qualities in the workplace. I termed this “phallic discharge” as it actively shaped and damaged inter-relational ties at work, for instance, resulting in acts of hostility towards women or individualism and deviousness. Despite discursively distancing themselves from these qualities, an “ideological dilemma” appeared to emerge in which women felt uncomfortable rejecting non-phallic positions, such as reflexivity and pragmatism, whilst simultaneously recognizing the importance of expressing phallic qualities in order to keep up with other colleagues in terms of promotion and remuneration. The implication was that women, therefore, were imbricated in the construction of these qualities as the only currency with which to exchange within the “phallic economy”. Qualities disassociated with confidence, such as deliberation, pragmatism, self-doubt and reflectivity, often related to femininity, were constructed as having little capital or value within the phallus. I described how this “phallic discharge” configures itself as “persecutory feminine figure” as women, particularly non-executive women, self-recriminate for not expressing qualities

associated with confidence and represents a form of phallic emasculation. Women can be described as, therefore, psychically “cracked open”, shamed and in need of the phallus.

This is not to suggest that women could not embody the phallus or at least aspects of it. What I mean by that is that the phallus neither represents “masculinity” or “femininity”. I would argue that my own experiences of Reverie (see Chapter 4) indicated, for instance, how some executive women can embody phallic positions and express qualities that diminish the position of others. There is more work to be done on understanding the assumption of women into phallic positions, extending the work of other scholars in the field such as Mavin and Grandy (2016). However, it is hard to deny the over concentration of women in non-phallic positions.

Narcissistically Invested, Down-Up Position

Three psycho-discursive dynamics were identified pertaining to the Narcissistic Investment. First, most executive and non-executive women avowed the existence of gender parity in the finance and accounting sector. However, they failed to provide a critical rationalization for its persistence. Many of the women, instead, drew on interpretative repertoires that had an individualizing dynamic. These repertoires both repudiated inequality and directed the responsibility for avowed change *onto* the individual. The implication of this individualizing force was that they deflected attention from broader, structural systems of inequality that continue to obstruct the fair progression of women in the sector, onto the individual. Secondly, I described this position as “flat” or “down” as the accounts given by executive women defended such individualistic positions through *projection* in which women redirected blame for the continued under-representation of women onto less successful women. Executive women rationalized this as poor career decision making in a constructed context in which there were

lots of opportunities for women and, therefore, routes to success, which they implied they had successfully navigated. This reflects broader neoliberal positions in which some women assume a “doing the right thing” discourse, which evokes a fallacious sense of self-autonomy and dependence. Thirdly, as executive women constructed the idea that less successful women do not make the right choices, the trope of “personal choice” furnished the psychic reality of non-executive women. The function of the trope was to explain decisions as belonging to the self rather than as choices that one has to make within unfair organisational norms and practices. The implication of this trope is that undermines the potential for collective action through the individualization of responsibility on the subject.

I conceptualised this psycho-discursive dynamics as a “narcissistically invested, down-up” investment as, although women recognised the presence of inequality, they simultaneously defended neoliberal ideologies regarding “meritocracy” and “self-autonomy” to deflect criticism away from organisational norms and structures. Why would women protect systems that undermine them in the workplace? I suggested that this enables women to restore a sense of knowing and, moreover, viability in the workplace. Is it more comfortable to avow systems that position oneself as abject than to distort and challenge them, and therefore, acknowledge one’s abjection? In other words, it appears that women “believe” in fairness as a way to avoid uncomfortable thoughts, and it is easier to “suppress” these thoughts than to attempt to change them. The move also by executive women to blame less successful for the persistence of inequality militates against solidarity. Psychoanalysts may suggest that it is psychically easier to defend broader normalising discourses that embody affects such as guilt, which can move the subject towards capacities to care and responsibility for others.

I also recognised that in certain cases there were higher concentrations of “down”, individualistic, self-autonomous positions. I described these cases as “flat” as they rarely touched on feelings or thoughts that reflected the

complexity and hardships as a woman working in a highly masculine workplace. However, I suggested that there were advantages with “trying down”, which could be conceptualised as the “flip up” side, as they did not disrupt the coherence of the organisation, this gave the women the sense that unknown opportunities remained open, albeit less likely when compared to those available to men. Therefore, I argued that the “down-up” position is narcissistic as it works, overall, to undermine solidarity in favour of individual desires and potential gains.

Sadomasochistic, Up-Down Position

A curious contrast between men and women in the finance and accounting sector pertained to their object of desire. Whereas men held clearly defined “phallic desires”, regarding the acquisition of power, privilege and wealth, the desires of many women contrasted sharply as they concerned gaining skills and experience. There were other instances in which women who had held “phallic desires” similar to men appeared to lose them, and were reconfigured into non-phallic frames of success. I suggested a number of reasons for this apparent movement of the object of desire. Discourse theorists would likely argue, firstly, that women are drawing on gender appropriate discourses to construct what are essentially “phallic desires” in ways, which fit stereotypically, nurturing, and passive forms of femininity. Secondly, they may suggest that non-executive women could be disavowing their relative lack of success to men through the assumption of “I don’t care” “child-like” tropes, in which their discursive desires become attached to other aspects of work, as a way to deflect from their failures, and find an acceptable, albeit more subordinate, position.

Psychoanalytically inclined academics may suggest that this “rerouting” of desire represents how the subject “takes in” the desire and “turns inwards”. This “turning awards’, they may argue, represents an attempt by the women

to control unmanageable extra-psychic tensions in the workplace. These anxieties might be emanating from a discursive reality in which women are positioned as lacking confidence and in deficit at work. Could the concern, therefore, by non-executive women with self-improvement and development reflect a sense of self-pleasure psychically “to fill in” a lack? In some cases, it was unclear whether these phallic frames of success were completely lost into the women, as they sometimes gave contradictory accounts in which they continued to recognise, although to a lesser extent, that assuming senior level roles represented success.

Could this represent a form of “psychic elongation” in which the phallus distracts, particularly non-executive women, from what is *actually* required for success and, therefore, endowing men with “neoliberal privileges”? Does this point towards a much deeper psychic life of the phallus in tropologically reshaping the psyche and pleasure of neoliberal subjects? I conceptualise this position, overall, as a “somasochistic, up-down position” as, whilst women self-berate for not expressing qualities associated with confidence and wish, therefore, to be psychically “cracked open” and subordinated at the mercy of the phallus, they also appear to gain significant pleasure from self-development and improvement. This position can be described as “up-down” as despite bringing self-pleasure and enjoyment, this appears to distract women from what is *actually* required to attain success within the phallic economy. The use of psychoanalytical and discursive ideas in this and other positions enables one to consider the individual, subject-level and broader neoliberal discourses at work, and understand how power moves from the “explicit” (e.g. how women rationalise inequalities and experiences) to the “implicit” (e.g. how power “distracts” women and “deflects” them from the operation of neoliberalism).

Double-Down Position

Despite recognizing discomfort emanating from unfair and abrasive organisational norms and practices, the vast majority of accounts given by women did not express anger, resistance or criticism towards these systems. Instead, executive women individualized these problems as emerging from within themselves, and embodied these challenges as battles to be found alone. Perhaps even more perniciously was how, in some cases, senses of guilt were evoked when women broke these organisational norms and practices, for instance, when women had to pick up their children in school, even if this lost time was recuperated later on in the evening. The implication of “individualizing injury” tropes is that they depoliticized the subject, which connects with broader research on the operation of neoliberal power (McNay, 2009).

I conceptualised this as a “double-down” position. Subjects occupy a “down” position as they passively endured significant discomfort pertaining to, for instance, anxiety and paranoia, and did not express resistance or anger against the structures impinging upon them. Subjects then moved towards doubling down on these injuries by constructing themselves as the origin of their wounds. I explained how this represents subjects psychically “folding over” discomfort, which triggers a psycho-discursive dynamic of self-recrimination, which represents how pain is therefore felt twice over. I suggested that this may indicate the attempt by subjects to bandage up their scrapes, bumps and bruises, somewhat ironically, the injuries that they have endured. However, drawing on Butler (2015), I argued how this position is a “thoroughly brittle” and breakable position (p.8). For Butler (2015), senses of the self are not primary and, thus, do not register prior to the formation of thoughts. Butler explains that the attempt to understand oneself as the source of its feelings is a way the subject can think of itself as “agentic”. She instead argues that norms and affects that precede the “I”, circulating in the world, before they touch us

and open up an “affective register” (p.5).

Paranoid-Schizoid Position and Split-Self

The positions explored, thus far, reflect investments and their associated psycho-discursive dynamics, tropes and qualities. As noted, many of the aforementioned investments can be conceptualised as “flat”, highly defensive, irrational and, as Butler (2015) describes, “brittle”. For instance, how is that someone can recognise unfair outcomes from organisational practices and norms, such as the under-representation of women, but blame themselves or others for this? This raises questions regarding the “mechanisms” involved in the assumption and movement into such flat, defensive and rationally brittle investments. Psychoanalysts often draw on the idea of “splitting” or what I term, similar to McRobbie (2015), the “split-self”. Melanie Klein theorised “splitting” between the self and objects into “good” and “bad”, with no integration. Klein develops the idea in relation to early childhood and argues that infants suffer from significant anxiety caused from trauma, for instance, hunger and frustration. The infant attempts to manage these experiences through splitting their ego and mother, and projecting “love” and “hate” into separate parts of the mother. Thus, the “maternal object” is split between the “bad” and “good” breast. This splitting represents what Klein terms the “Paranoid-Schizoid Position”. The movement into this position involves the subject, on the one hand, sensing an object as frustrating, persecutory and hated, and the other, as loved and loving. The two objects are iteratively introjected and / or projected out, which evokes senses of omnipotence and idealisation. Klein also identified “fragmentation” as a particular form of splitting in which the subject and / or the object break down into smaller pieces, which creates a significant disturbance for the subject.

The “Paranoid-Schizoid Position” provides useful way to conceptualise the “mechanisms” involved in the movement of subjects *into* highly defensive, flat and brittle positions. Psychoanalytically inflected scholars may identify splitting in a number of the aforementioned positions. In the “Sadomasochistic, Up-Down Position”, for instance, psychoanalysts may argue that the desire by subjects to improve themselves through the attempted embodiment of “confidence tropes”, and their simultaneous self-recrimination, could represent a defensive or melancholic effect against a sense of loss of success, or a melancholic “knowingness” that these phallic frames of success are no longer reachable. Many of the accounts given by non-executive women drew on non-phallic frames of success and, in some cases, represented a movement of the object of desire from initial phallic frames. Is the “bad object”, therefore, split off from the object of desire and introjected into the subject, as a way for subjects to idealise neoliberal phallic frames of success, for instance, regarding meritocratic ideologies? The discursive focus on, for instance, the connection between ‘career success’ and ‘making the right decisions’ by women would arguably support the irrational defence of such neoliberal ideologies, regarding meritocracy and individual “fairness”. The idea of splitting here also supports my earlier argument that perhaps the “taking in” or introjection of the bad object reorients women towards themselves in response to the bad object melancholically furnishing the psychic reality of women as “deficient” and “lacking”. Women are, thus, distracted from criticising the object of desire, configured in phallic, neoliberal forms, which abject aspects of their subjectivity, and turn towards themselves in the form of self-recrimination. This points us to what Butler (1997) terms the “psychic life of power” and not just the idea that “desire” is defined in unfair ways, but that there are also pernicious psychic “intentions” in the ways outlined, which seek fundamentally to reshape tropologically the shared or “collective psyche” of subjects, breaking down the coherence of internal and shared subjectivities, and damaging inter-relational bonds.

Psychoanalytically inflected scholars may also suggest, for instance, that the repudiation of gender inequality and the take up of narcissistic investments,

represents a form of anxious defensiveness, and an attempt to maintain viability within the “phallic economy”. The repudiation of unfair organisational systems and norms and the idealisation of perceived “good” aspects, for instance, ideologies regarding “personal choice”, may enable subjects to introject the “bad” and identify with aspects of the “good” neoliberal object. In other words, subjects are “protecting” the “good” aspects of neoliberalism in the workplace from being destroyed by its “bad” aspects. This inhibits the subject from moving into, what Klein would consider, an “ambivalent position”, from which they can provide a more distorted and rational perspective on neoliberalism. This does not mean that women were not cognizant of some of the challenging aspects of working under neoliberalism, for instance, the intensive and extensive workloads. However, rarely was a critical rationalisation offered which points towards a “shielding” from the harsher realities of working under neoliberalism. Instead, these challenges (“the bad object”) were either blamed on others (projected out) or individualised (introjected in), furnishing a psychic reality in which rationalised systematic problems are sensed as emerging from *within* the self.

The examples of splitting may suggest a move by the subject towards “fragmentation” and dissolution of both the object and the subject themselves. The aforementioned investments and examples of splitting appear to evoke a sense of omnipotence and control in contexts in which discomfort is generated, for instance, through intensive and extensive working conditions. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, the intolerance of discomfort and the movement into and the pleasure sought in senses of omnipotence and control, are rather fallacious and appear to evoke significance psychic states of discomfort such as anxiety, paranoia, and guilt. These represent a “second order” of senses related to precariousness, knowingness-unknowing and solitude, which curiously appear to be more “tolerable” than acknowledging reality.

Capacity to Care

An important aim of this research was, however, to identify *moves from* the aforementioned positions linked to neoliberalism. Although the research was concerned with the psychic life of power under neoliberalism, I was also interested in challenging conceptions of the subject as static and complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism, and particularly, to identify ethical vicissitudes of the subject and the movement out of the “paranoid-schizoid” position towards care and responsibility for others. Although women often sought to present themselves as autonomous and individualistic, tropologically their accounts revealed the importance of others, problematizing their discursive positioning as “self-contained”. In particular, broken attachments with significant others in the workplace, enabled some women *to move away* from narcissistically invested positions towards a greater concern for the other, what I termed the “capacity to care”. This capacity reflected the ability to *redirect* violence and destructive impulses away from the other, the use of heightened imagery to symbolize breaks in violent acts, and a sense of guilt for expressing capacities of harm. I described this position as “ambivalent” as subjects were aware of how this violence felt and recognise their own capacity to inflict it on others. Butler (2009a) asserts that it is precisely as we are formed in a “...mired of violence” that “...the possibility of non-violence” opens up (p.171). Butler explains that if one attempts to disavow violence, they run the risk of morally legitimising it and relocating their persecution *onto* the other, and denying, in turn, the injury they have inflicted. However, she explains that the avowal of violence enables the individual to reshape their rage and potential destruction in ways that protect precarious lives. Thus, the aforementioned oscillations outlined reflect efforts by the women to modify their anger and aggression to protect others.

Further Explorations

This research has not, unfortunately, foregrounded all the possible ways in which neoliberalism is constituted from the ground-up, and the different subject vicissitudes that can emerge, including counter-neoliberal positions. From my perspective, the PhD is not a static picture, and my reading during the latter part of the programme alerted me to other questions and ideas that would further enrich the research. For instance, I became increasingly intrigued by the work of Wilfred Bion, some of his work I outlined in Chapter 4, particularly his ideas around the “capacity to think”, and also Jessica Benjamin’s idea of the “Third Subject”. I refrain from exploring these complex ideas here. However, their work raises further questions regarding and extending the idea of the capacity to care, outlined in the previous section: How can subjects tolerate uncertainty as a way to acquire a greater “capacity to think”, particularly in tumultuous senses of knowing-unknowingness? How can subjects hold onto traumatic experiences and represent them? How can psychic excess also emerging from trauma and violence be *redirected* not towards others but towards the “process” itself or a “third (figurative) subject”? How can the “container, passive position” be enjoyed, opened up and shape broader ethical dynamics in the workplace?

Scholarship on the “capacity to care” could, more generally, consider other reasons why subjects assume the capacity to care within the finance and accounting profession or perhaps in other highly individualistic, neoliberal organisations. For instance, what other events and stories can prompt individuals to consider how they relate to others? There was some evidence in the literature that the women wanted to create changes in the workplace but many of their ideas appeared to be trapped in a neoliberal paradigm, for example, by helping other women to ‘lean in’ *even* more (Sandberg, 2013). How can organisational scholars and practitioners think about how these paradigms can be unravelled to support more effective care? For some time, I had considered “vulnerability” the basis for a renewed politics of care in

organisations. However, Butler (2017) recently suggested that, whilst recognising the importance of vulnerability and the fact that our bodily existence by default makes us dependent upon each other, she believes that responsibility for the other emerges from ethical obligations that are embedded in precarity. It is challenging to suggest what this might mean for empirical scholars. For me at this early point of deliberation, it raises questions regarding, for instance: What are the ethical obligations in organisations? How are they articulated? How does one respond to ethical soliciting even when one does not want to? Future work may wish to extend capacities of care emerging from vulnerability towards what Butler refers to as ethical obligations.

In contrast, more work must also be done to understand the psycho-discursive dynamics of what I term “capacities to hate” or “persecute”. In particular, one common thread associated with the different investments taken up by subjects, was “narcissism”. However, there has been very little scholarship on “organisational narcissism”. This is surprising considering its pervasiveness in many of the discourses drawn on by the men and women in this research. This would likely require a re-exploration of work on narcissism by Freud in order to situate it within contemporary the neoliberal workplace. This raises questions regarding, for instance: What are the different aspects of narcissism identified by Freud? Could these be explored through discursive repertoires? What psycho-dynamics are embedded within these tropes and interpretative repertoires? What senses are evoked or imagery? Moreover, what are the implications of these discourses on others? This is important as we head into what Gill (2017) recently described as “turbo neoliberalism” and its intensified attack on solidarity and inter-relational bonds at work.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis has attempted to respond to the lacuna of research on gender from a psychoanalytically inflected position in accounting and finance. This is not a “pure” psychoanalytical view but one I have tried to integrate pragmatically with a discourse analytic perspective. I am not suggesting that this is a polished framework. On the contrary, I feel as though the PhD represents my foundational thinking on these complex matters. For instance, how could I weave more intricately into my analysis foundational psychoanalytical ideas regarding “splitting” to highlight more profoundly the nature of defensive positions, whilst remaining recognisable to critical discursive scholars? How does this connect with ideas of care, compassion and responsibility at work? How can I build on more robustly my use of Reverie and make it useable for other qualitative researchers? I also look forward to reflecting the wider voices of executive and non-executive men in forthcoming publications.

Overall, the research has begun to uncover some of the important discourses and dynamics emerging at the subject-level and their connection to broader neoliberal discourses in accounting and finance. This helps scholars understand the ways in which the psychic reality of employees is shaped by neoliberalism and its affective register. Firstly, at the start of the thesis, I attempted to explore the role of confidence as a shared frame of understanding organisations, and its relational construction within a phallic system. Secondly, I wanted to understand how shared frames, such as confidence, and broader organisational practices, registered at the subject level, through paranoia, guilt and unknowingness, and moreover, its role in closing down critical positions. Finally, I wanted to show some of the alternative neoliberal positions at work, and in particular, how violence under neoliberalism may prompt subjects towards more responsible and ethical positions. This, as I stressed, is not to suggest that neoliberalism is

somehow ‘good’ or ‘ethical’, but that within this oppressive system, perturbations and pockets of compassion can still emerge.

Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Thank you for taking the time out to participate in this research.

First and foremost, can I confirm that you have read and understood fully the Participant Information Sheet sent to you via e-mail? I would also like to give you a copy to keep.

May I also confirm that you have read and understood the Consent Form and are happy to sign it?

What is said in the interview is kept strictly confidential and all the data will be anonymised.

The interview will last from 60 to 90 minutes. I will be asking a number of broad questions regarding your career in the sector. There is no right or wrong answer. I am simply looking to understand your experiences and thoughts. I would like it if you were as detailed as possible in your responses so please include examples where you feel it is appropriate.

Are you happy to proceed?

Career to date	<p>Could you tell me a bit about your career to date?</p> <p>Please ensure the following points are covered:</p> <p><i>What accounting or finance qualifications do you hold?</i></p>
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	<p><i>How long have you spent at your current grade?</i></p> <p><i>How long did you spend at all your previous grades?</i></p>
Definition of Success	<p>Can you describe what success looked like to you when you first entered the finance and accounting sector?</p> <p>Has that changed today?</p>
Own success	<p>In light of the definition you have provided, would you describe your career as successful?</p>
Key moments	<p>What were the key moments that shaped your career? What helped or held you back?</p>
Space and body	<p>Please read this [<i>document 'Interview_the_double_participant_story_v0.1' given to participant</i>].</p> <p>Look at the map. The map shows your office floor plan and the immediate area surrounding the office.</p> <p>Where do you sit?</p> <p>Can you explain what you have tomorrow in the office?</p>

	<p>And, where do you have to go to do it?</p> <p><i>Possible prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you do in this part of the office?</i> • <i>Who else works in this area of the office?</i> • <i>Can you describe this part of the office to me?</i> • <i>How do you feel there?</i> • <i>Are there any places in the office you don't go to? Why?</i> • <i>Where do you go to socialise with colleagues?</i> • <i>What do you do there?</i> • <i>How do you feel there?</i>
Office desk	<p>Can you describe the objects on your office desk?</p> <p>How have these objects changed during your career?</p>
Gender	<p>Do you think it matters how you present yourself as a man or a woman in the workplace?</p>
Work/Life	<p>Could you tell me a bit about the relationship between your home life and work life?</p>
Gender	<p>Have you ever found yourself in a situation at work where you have felt as though you have been left out?</p>
Gender	<p>Do you believe men and women are equal in the workplace?</p> <p>What facilitates and challenges gender equality?</p>
Space and future	<p>In this next part of the interview, you are going to be looking 30 years into the future of the organisation.</p> <p>I am going to show you three installations depicting the future.</p>

First, this is an internet page. It shows the diversity statistics for the organisation.

Please read the installation.

What do you think of the information?

How will the organisation achieve this?

In the future, the organisation will be located in a newly designed office building on Canada Square. The second installation is an artist's impression of the new future office building, which is in the background. The installation also includes the remaining part Canada Square.

Canada Square has changed. This part of the square has become a relaxing sanctuary and this is a yoga platform. The objective of both is to provide calming, relaxing and healthy places for those who work on Canada Square and Canary Wharf more generally.

This is a scaled model of the new organisation to give you some idea of the dimensions.

What do you think of the pictures and model?

How do the installations compare to the office and Canada Square now?

	<i>What would you change about them? Why?</i>
Future	How do you anticipate your future career to evolve?
Additions	We have reached the end of the interview. Do you have any additions or anything else you want to clarify?

Appendix II: Participant Consent Form



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Research: *Up, Out or Sideways? Comparing Career Patterns of Men and Women Executives in Accounting and Finance*

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP/14/15-108

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. Darren Thomas Baker is the person organising the research and he must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

**Please tick
or initial**

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes mean that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

☐

**Please tick
or initial**

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated [31/01/2015 v1.0] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and asked questions that have been answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to **2 weeks** after my interview. ☐
3. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998. ☐
4. I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the College for monitoring and audit purposes. ☐
5. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications. ☐
6. I agree that the research team may use my data for future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee. (In such cases, as with this project, data would/would not be identifiable in any report). ☐
7. I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report and I wish to receive a copy of it. ☐
8. I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Darren Thomas Baker	Date	Signature

Appendix III: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

REC Reference Number: REP/14/15-108

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study

Up, Out or Sideways? Comparing Career Patterns of Men and Women Executives in Accounting and Finance

Invitation Paragraph

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project that forms part of my PhD research. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in anyway. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is conducted by King's College London and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The main aim of the project is to understand the career trajectories of men and women in the finance and accounting sector. The research aims to identify the enablers and inhibitors to their career progression.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you have significant experience in the finance and accounting sector.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part. You should read this information sheet and if you have any questions you should ask me. You should not agree to take part in this research until you have had all your questions answered satisfactorily.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. At a time convenient for you, I will then email you to arrange an interview that fits your schedule. With your consent, I will arrange to interview you in a private room at your office. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and be based on an interview guide, but it is designed to be flexible so as to meet your needs. The interview will be recorded, subject to your permission.

Incentives

There is no financial incentive to participate in this research

What are the possible risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in the study. The main disadvantage to taking part in the study is that you will be donating around 60 to 90 minutes of your time. It is possible that you may find answering some of the questions challenging. This is unlikely but if it were to occur, the interview can be terminated at any time, if you wanted to do so.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

*What is said in the interview is regarded as strictly confidential and will be held securely until the research is finished. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind, you are free to stop your participation up to **two weeks** following the interview. All data for analysis will be anonymised. In reporting on the research findings, I will not reveal the names of any participants or the organisation where you work. At all times there will be no possibility of you as individuals being linked with the data. The UK Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to all information gathered within the interviews and held on password-locked computer files and locked cabinets within King's College London. All recordings of data on audio equipment will be deleted after transcription.*

How is the project being funded?

This project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

What will happen to the results of the study?

I will write a business publication for the ACCA based on all my findings from across all the organisations I am studying. This will be sent to all those interviewed and be publically available. The result may also feature in academic publications including journals and books.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Darren Thomas Baker

Department of Management

King's College London

Franklin-Wilkins Building

150 Stamford Street

London SE1 9NH

Tel: +44 (0)7572419018

Email: darren.baker@kcl.ac.uk

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Elisabeth Kelan

elisabeth.kelan@kcl.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.

Appendix IV: Table of participants

66 participants were interviewed for this research.

The table below lists the 36 non-executive men and women interviewed:

Participant Name	Gender	No Yrs Experience	Level in Organisation	Organisation Type
Duncan	M	9	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Anna	F	18.5	Upper Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Shirley	F	10	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Matthew	M	13.5	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Mary	F	6.5	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Scott	M	11.5	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Sandra	F	8	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Danny	M	13.5	Middle Management	Public Sector Org
Sid	M	12	Middle Management	Global Investment Bank
Derek	M	19	Upper Middle Management	Regional Accountant Firm
Cindy	F	14.5	Upper Middle Management	Global Investment Bank
Catherine	F	18	Upper Middle Management	Global Investment Bank
Jed	M	6	Middle Management	Moved out of the sector
Owen	M	10.5		Global Investment Bank
Leanne	F	16.5	Upper Middle Management	Pension Investments
Brenda	F	13.5	Upper Middle Management	Moved out of the sector
Anthony	M	18	Middle Management	Asset Management
Flora	F	12.5	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Penelope	F	13	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Jane	F	10	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Jessie	F	10.5	Upper Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Jade	F	24	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm

Tim	M	11	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Catrina	F	13	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Stuart	M	11	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Cara	F	16.5	Upper Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Shaun	M	11.5	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Vanessa	F	17	Upper Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Janet	F	13	Upper Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
George	M	12	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Abbey	F	13	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Patricia	F	17	Upper Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Stefan	M	17	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Harriet	F	12	Middle Management	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Michael	M	4	Lower Middle Management	Global Investment Bank
Paul	M	7	Upper Middle Management	Global Investment Bank

The table lists the 30 executive men and women interviewed:

Participant Name	Gender	No Yrs Experience	Level	Type of Organisation
Peter	M	30	Executive	Public Sector Org
Linda	F	25	Executive	Boutique Accounting Firm
David	M	20	Executive	Boutique Accounting Firm
Nathan	M	19	Executive	Media Group
Sarah	F	23	Executive	Global Investment Bank
Joanne	F	21	Executive	Global Private Equities Firm / Venture Capital
Julie	F	25	Executive	Global Private Equities Firm / Venture Capital
Lauren	F	16	Executive	Global Investment Bank
Jackie	F	18	Executive	Global Private Equities Firm / Venture Capital
Samantha	F	26.5	Executive	European Private Equities Firm
Rebecca	F	24	Executive	Global Private Equities Firm / Venture Capital
Caillin	F	30	Executive	Global Private Equities Firm / Venture Capital
Florence	F	22	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Pierce	M	21	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Kim	F	20	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Sharon	F	40	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Deborah	F	23	Executive	Global Investment Bank
Deidre	F	23	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Stefan	M	35	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Nick	M	31	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Norman	M	28	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Martin	M	35	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Paula	F	18	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Stella	F	30.5	Executive	Big Four
Terrence	M	24	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Ewan	M	33	Executive	Mid-Tier Accountancy Firm
Neal	M	16	Executive	Global Investment Bank

Colan	M	16	Executive	Global Investment Bank
Jarret	M	14	Executive	Global Investment Bank
Phil	M	15	Executive	Global Investment Bank

Appendix V: Transcription Notations

...	Parts of sentences omitted
[Pause]	Pause in sentence
[text]	Additional information for reader
*	Expletives
-	Short Pause

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